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AN ESSAY ON AMERICAN IDEALISM

BY

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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AND A PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION BY
THE AUTHOR

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PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION

I SHALL not try to conceal the pleasure it gives me to see my book, *The People of Action*, published in the United States and introduced to the acquaintance of the American people by the house of Scribner. At the moment when our two great democracies, with all their strengths united, are fighting for a peace of justice and for the independence of the world, I confess to feeling some pride in the thought that my modest effort for strengthening the bonds which join us has been thought worthy of so great an honor.

If my book has no other merit, it possesses that of entire sincerity. Along with eulogies which I have not tried either to minimize or to exaggerate, it contains some reservations, even some criticisms, which I have no wish to weaken. I have sought to show my fellow countrymen the American as I have seen him, with his qualities of energy, audacity, generosity; but also with his faults—or rather the things which I have seemed to find defective in

him—his extreme impulsiveness, his somewhat narrow views, his still incomplete culture.

Such as he is, he has seemed to me very great, and to have grown even greater by the part that he has just taken in the view of history. The events which have happened since the publication of my book in France have confirmed me in this belief.

American intervention, which was then hardly more than a promise, has developed to-day with a strength that could hardly be imagined. What seemed to be impossible has been realized. The provision made for it has surpassed expectation and beaten all records. In January, 1918, there were only a few thousands of American soldiers on our soil; to-day we may estimate 1,300,000, perhaps 1,500,000. The tide flows on unceasingly, with a regularity that is impressive, formidable. In the vigorous words of President Wilson, the hour cannot be long delayed when the forces of liberty will be everywhere overwhelming the forces of slavery, and when it will at last be possible for man to live truly and fully in a pacified and regenerated world.

And of this peaceful regeneration the United States will have been, not of course the sole agents, but among the chief constructors. They

will have had the advantage over old and divided Europe of being a young people, a united federation, and even now in a concrete form a first League of Nations.

Thus for all their Allies they are at the same time a model to follow and, it must be confessed, a riddle to solve. They do not come into the conflict with that old mentality adjusted to war which we bring to it, all of us, in a greater or less degree; for they have not behind them eight or ten centuries of battling against foreign peoples. War, well as they make it—and we know how fervently—is for them in some degree a word without meaning, for war presupposes conquest, and they recognize nothing but voluntary agreement; peoples are not for them a kind of cattle to be bartered or stolen by the right of the strongest; they are autonomous beings, masters of their own destinies. War makes sacred the rule of fact in all its original brutality—the human, or rather the inhuman, beast unchained to gratify his lowest appetites; and the United States proclaims the rule of law, the judicial state permanently and definitely established between equals, respect alike for the individual personality and the collective personality.

Yes, the American nation, which is still in

the making, which is still seeking to find itself, but which in this present struggle *will* find itself once for all, is among all peoples the peaceful nation, the one which owes to the achievements of peace both its unprecedented prosperity and its purely democratic institutions. It is, if I may say so, peace made a nation, as its President, Mr. Wilson, is peace made man.

And it is from this that the intervention of the United States in the World War derives its full meaning. To German imperialism, to that final return to their ancestral barbarism which we thought we could look upon as definitely checked by civilization, the United States inflexibly opposes the great dam of its men, its armament, and its gold. It says to this devilish force: Thou shalt go no further. It is forcing it back, and forever, into the darkness of the Middle Ages from which by an incomprehensible anachronism it burst forth to lay waste the world.

"This does not belong to our day," M. Clemenceau, now Premier of France, wrote in an article in *L'Homme Libre* just after the war broke out. "This does not belong to our day," repeated after him Mr. Wilson, and with its President spoke the whole American Union;

and it is "our day" that has just brought into being the young American army, the army of liberty, to drive back the day of the past, the day of mediæval slavery.

This army has but just entered the fight, where it has shown to a wondering world and an astounded Germany of what achievement it is capable. Against professional soldiers, against veterans trained in all the devices of war, it has tested the strength of its young volunteers—perhaps still somewhat inexperienced but fighting for an ideal and not for a master. In conjunction with the other Allied combatants it has checked at its first blow the German force, and to-morrow it will shatter it.

But if the military effort of the United States has been beyond compare, it has its double in a civil effort which is not less so. The population of this country, which overflows with riches, where harvests and provisions are spread broadcast in their abundance, has voluntarily imposed upon itself the severest privations. It has stinted itself of bread in order to feed those nations beyond the Atlantic which the submarine blockade was trying to starve. It has experienced, more than France and very largely for the sake of France, crises in coal and

other necessary products; it has accepted very severe restrictions, not merely patiently but joyously, with a smile upon its lips.

Toward our country especially it has shown an admirable devotion, and I may add delicacy. It has given in profusion, as is its custom, and in giving it has taken the attitude not of a benefactor but of one fulfilling an obligation. The American Red Cross, the Rockefeller mission, the Young Men's and the Young Women's Christian Associations—to mention only the most important among its charitable institutions—have all rivalled one another in generosity, ingenuity, and industry. The American has one virtue and a rare one—he remembers services that have been done him; he is never ungrateful. “We of the United States are a grateful nation,” said General Allaire, provost marshal of the American forces in France. “Lafayette and Rochambeau are names that an American speaks with reverence and affection, are heroes whose memory he cherishes in his heart. And, as his fashion is, he is bringing back to you a hundredfold that which he received from you.”

However, at the same time that the American gives, he asks; and what he asks above all from France is an intellectual and moral collab-

oration and continuous exchange of opinions, ideas, and sentiments.

From this springs the daily and hourly co-operation that exists everywhere and in all fields of action. Examples are the "Foyers du Soldat," where the Young Men's Christian Association joins its endeavors to those of our French citizens and of our high command in placing its immense resources at the service of the troops. Such also is the "Foyer des Alliées," which the young women of the Y. W. C. A. have established for our employees and ammunition workers, with the intimate and constant support of some devoted Frenchwomen and of some leaders of industry. A further instance is the "Collège des Etats-Unis," which a Franco-American committee, made up of intellectual leaders of the two countries, is establishing in Paris, and which is proposing as the first point of its active programme the concerted study of progress made in war surgery, in war medicine, in war radiology. Still another is the ceaseless activity of the American Chamber of Commerce in Paris, which, under the urgent leadership of its president, Mr. Walter Berry, is exerting itself to bring about in the future following the war the closest and most productive commercial relations between the two countries.

Yes, that which America asks of France above all else is the means of obliging her, the most certain and most effective methods of making her "greater than ever," to quote once more from General Allaire.

She expects also that which we are able to give her and which we shall bring to her joyfully—I mean the "*culture de l'esprit*," that refinement of thought which has always been an attribute of the French race. To replace the German teachers in her universities, she appeals to ours. Young and still without pretension, she believes that she can get at our school that which she lacks, and that to make the complete man she can add to her qualities of action and of matter-of-factness the charm and, as it were, the perfume of French culture.

Thus there is everything to expect and everything to hope not only for the two nations but for all civilization from a Franco-American *rapprochement*—and even more from a Franco-American intimacy. This *rapprochement* and this intimacy come about by the very nature of things, and they will become every day more real. They arouse on all hands, besides efforts at practical realization, other attempts at propaganda of which my book is only a very inconsiderable sample. The future,

we may be sure, belongs to a great union of free peoples, and at the head of this union we may look to see especially the two great peoples which, one in the Old World and one in the New, have been the unquestioned champions of the rights of man and of the rights of nations.

This is what I desire to say to our American friends.

GUSTAVE RODRIGUES.

PARIS, August 15, 1918.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION BY J. MARK BALDWIN	xxiii
PREFACE TO THE FRENCH EDITION	xliii

CHAPTER I

AMERICA AND THE CONDITIONS OF ITS EXISTENCE

PREJUDICE AGAINST THE UNITED STATES.—AMERICAN REALISM AND IDEALISM	3
---	---

I. HISTORIC CONDITIONS

The United States have no historic past.—Their free- dom from national hatred	5
Colonial origins.—Subordination and elimination of the indigenous element	8
Immigration and the juxtaposition of races.—No Eng- lish hegemony.—America not Anglo-Saxon	11
American patriotism.—Federalism and particularism. —The “faculty of absorption” of the United States.—The American <i>patrie</i> in process of be- coming	16

II. POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The United States have no political past.—The origi- nal democracy and autonomy.—Ignorance of autocracy and centralization	20
--	----

III. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The United States have no economic past.—America was born contemporaneously with science.—Ra- tional and not empirical character of American production.—Agriculture.—Commerce.—Indus- try	26
--	----

The United States the land of the new and of invention.—American pluralism.—American activity	P.
---	----

CHAPTER II

THE INDIVIDUAL IDEAL

THE AMERICAN AN INDIVIDUALIST, BUT NOT INDIVIDUALIZED; WILL RATHER THAN INTELLIGENCE . . .	§
--	---

I. WEALTH

The American a "money-maker."—Contempt of "ready-made" wealth, dowry, inheritance.—Money the <i>criterium</i> of personal worth . . .	4
Money not an object of <i>enjoyment</i> , but a manifestation of <i>power</i> .—Daring of American capital . . .	4
The idealization of wealth.—Its moral action.—Its creative power.—Non-existence of the idle rich .	4
American philanthropy.—Its utilitarian character.—Disinterestedness of the very rich.—Voluntary self-improvement.—"It is a disgrace to die rich"	51

II. LIBERTY

The American meaning of liberty; emancipation and fullest realization of the individual	5§
1. <i>Independence</i> : America an "open field" for all activities	54
2. <i>Force</i> : power of expansion; struggle with destiny	56
3. <i>Will</i> : formation of character, effort; America the land of "hard workers"	58
4. <i>Well-being</i> : moral discipline and freedom of the will	62

CONTENTS

xvii

III. EDUCATION

	PAGE
Its virile character.—It admits of risk	66
Respect for the child's <i>liberty</i> .—Moral <i>equality</i> of parents and children	68
The American educational system.—Its practical character.—Culture sacrificed to utility.—Ameri- can science.—Little theory, but results	73

IV. THE MAN

A poor man who aspires to be rich.—His energy.— His faculty of adaptation to any task	78
The "business man."—The strenuous life.—The sense of <i>opportunity</i> .—Self-confidence	82
Incomplete but powerful life of the American.—The mysticism of activity	85

V. THE WOMAN

Equality of sexes.—Co-education.—Physical life and "culture"	89
Marriage.—Independence of the married woman.— Frequency of divorce.—Every woman a feminist	93

VI. THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The danger of anarchy.—Its remedies: <i>Personality</i> and <i>Morality</i>	99
1. <i>Personality</i> : the power of the individual; elimi- nation of the weak; America the country of vic- tors	102
2. <i>Morality</i> : Puritanism and Protestant discipline; personal religion; the sentiment of justice; alli- ance of duty and interest; idealization of self- interest; its natural prolongation into altru- ism	103
The individual ideal.—The new human type.—Em- erson's "reforming man"	117

CHAPTER III

THE NATIONAL IDEAL

I. THE STATE

	PAGE
America "a nation of individuals."—Contrast between European nationalism and American individualism.—There is no American nation . . .	122
Weakness of political life.—Power of public opinion.—American democracy	125

II. THE DECLARATION OF RIGHTS

The United States were born of Right and not of Fact.—Individual rights: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness	131
National rights.—Independence and moral personality.—"Righteous insurrection".	135
Rejection of the "strong government."—The United States a government of <i>men</i>	138

III. THE UNION

Heterogeneous character of the United States.—They form a union, but not a <i>unit</i> .—Autonomy and equality of the various states	142
Possible conflicts between states and union.—Flexibility of the unified organization	146

IV. THE PRESIDENT

He symbolizes <i>the Union</i> .—His powers.—His moral strength: he is the conscience of the United States	151
His judicial and arbitral character.—He holds his power only from the people	153

V. THE LAW

Pre-eminence of the judicial power.—The <i>Supreme Court</i> the guardian of the <i>Constitution</i> . . .	158
--	-----

CONTENTS

xix

	PAGE
Unity of legal orientation.—Every functionary is a <i>judge</i> giving sentence in accordance with the <i>Constitution</i> .—The States “centrifugal forces,” and the Constitution the “centripetal force”	161
Justice and legality the bases of the American nation.—“Honesty is the best policy”	167
The unity of America and “the Indestructibility of the Union”	170

CHAPTER IV

THE INTERNATIONAL IDEAL

I. AMERICAN INTERNATIONALISM

<i>America an Internation</i> .—Contrast between the <i>dis-united</i> states of Europe and the <i>United</i> States of America.—Rejection of the system of <i>alliances</i> and the politics of <i>conquest</i>	173
The Americanization of the United States.—Tendency toward the conception and accomplishment of <i>international duty</i>	180
The Monroe Doctrine and American isolation	184

II. THE ARMY AND WAR

American pacifism.—Non-existence of a standing army	187
The American militia.—“Volunteers of Liberty.”—Their military and their civil values.—The American army an <i>army of individuals</i>	190
War and peace.—War is cowardly, peace is courageous	194
Refusal of wars of conquest.—All American wars have been wars of independence	196

III. UNIVERSAL PEACE AND THE "SOCIETY OF NATIONS"

	PAGE
The nations considered as <i>moral persons</i> .—Autocracies and democracies.—The German Empire and its allies "enemies of humanity"	202
Intervention of America in the World War.—She represents the "future of humanity."—Emerson's "Declaration of Human Duties"	207
President Wilson's policy.—1. The installation of Right—Peace "without annexations and indemnities," but with "readjustments" and "reparations."—2. The "Society of Nations."—International justice and world union	213
The United States and "international duty."—The world made free.—The American ideal and the French ideal	225

CHAPTER V

AMERICAN IDEALISM

IDEALISM AND REALISM.—IS THERE AN AMERICAN IDEALISM?	229
--	-----

I. AMERICAN IDEALISM

There is no American idealism.—The meagreness of American life	229
Philosophical empiricism.—Utilitarian religion.—Imitative art.—Lack of sentimental comprehension.—The morals of self-interest	233

II. AMERICAN IDEALISM

There is an American idealism.—Idealism of action, not of thought	237
Philosophy of life and of creation.—Religion of humanity and salvation by effort.—Militant art.—	

CONTENTS

xxi

	PAGE
Strong sensibility against weak sensibility.—The morals of will and of work	240
Fundamental tendency: to “free energies” in order to “liberate values”	244
Conclusion: the practical ideal of actuality substi- tuted for the intellectual ideal of culture . .	249

INTRODUCTION

I CONSIDER it a privilege to write an introduction to this book. I see in it the means of bringing to light a sort of collaboration which, in addition to so many others, will contribute a little to tighten the bonds of the Franco-American *entente*.

I also find in it a pleasure, for I deem this book to be one of great interest and real value, especially at this time when Frenchmen and Americans are looking one another squarely in the eye, and asking one another: "Who are you? What may I expect of you?" M. Rodrigues here tells his fellow countrymen what the American is, and what the Frenchmen may expect to receive from him.

What, then, is the American?

The author replies, as others have done before him, though with less precision, and in a less concise form: "What is the American? This is what he is: In temperament, a man of action, of efficiency; in the matter of culture, a novice; in theory and practice—so far as he has any—an individualist; in tendency and

purpose, whether individual or national, an unconscious idealist."

On all these points I agree with the author, and he sums up his just conclusions in a truly masterly way. The only reservations which I shall have to make, whatever their importance may be, bear only upon details, upon examples and facts cited, upon toning down certain too energetic statements, but not upon their fundamental significance.

In every case when we penetrate to the ideal we are confronted with a question; when we consider the Americans taken as a whole, we have to ask ourselves: What is precisely the sort of individualism that they present to-day (rather than in the time of Emerson, or before the war of 1861-5), and what is precisely the type of idealism toward which they are tending? In each of these directions we find something specifically American, for at both view-points the American is the product of a particular growth, due to particular conditions of existence so well described by M. Rodrigues in his first chapter.

First of all, as regards American individualism, it is little developed in precisely those domains in which that of the Frenchman has

made the most advance: in moral, social, and æsthetic subjects. Without doubt, when the American drew up his political constitution he laid claim, at first for himself, and later for his slaves, to the individual rights of the citizen carried to their extreme consequences; without doubt he has developed industry and commerce by means of an individual competition which has shown itself harsh and pitiless; without doubt he demands for every one, and he grants to every one, liberty and equality of condition in matters of education, commerce, and industry. On all these points his individualism is only too evident. In morals he was content in the beginning to adopt integrally the puritan and evangelical models of Great Britain. In his attitude toward law he has unceasingly shown the docility and simplicity of the colonist, held to submit himself to an absolute constabulary authority; and as to his sentiments, while propagating the precepts of a narrow religious austerity, he has merely exaggerated the sanctions attached to public opinion and local prejudices. In everything that concerns social responsibility and moral conduct the American is a blind collectivist, excessively scrupulous and intolerant, and with that a religious absolutist.

Strangely enough, instead of judging his re-

ligion by his morality, he does precisely the opposite. To the American in general the sanctions of morality are almost exclusively religious; he seeks them in the *ipse dixit* of Holy Scripture. Thus one of the most solid ramparts of the South in the Civil War was the support which Bible texts afforded to ministers in justification of the institution of slavery.¹ There is a current adage: "Morality without religion is vain."² In matters of art these factors are still complicated with coarseness of taste due to a lack of education.

In the eyes of the American this "collectivism" and "legalism" admit of no exception, any more than they allow of personal favors, except in the domain of business obligations. The principle has remained true to the present time for the great captains of industry and the magnates of commerce; in business necessity knows no law, and force creates right. But at the same time these very men have vigorously held to the text, "Avoid every appearance of evil," and personally yielded with the most scrupulous punctuality to all the rigors of moral and re-

¹ The chastity expected of young men, of which M. Rodrigues speaks, is based upon religion; every sexual connection outside of conjugal relations is prohibited as being *tainted with sin*.

² When appearing to suggest that the contrary is true in the United States, I think that M. Rodrigues overestimates the importance of the non-religious part of the population.

ligious conformity. To play dominoes, attend a concert, go into the country for pleasure on a Sunday, was to expose oneself to public opprobrium, as many persons over twenty years of age may perfectly recall to mind, and even many who have not yet reached that age. In certain of the largest denominations, whose numerous members may be found almost everywhere, to dance, play cards or the lottery, drink wine or beer, are acts which, without always being the object of official reprobation, are none the less condemned by imperious public opinion as things "of this world," and "irreligious."

In this regard the nation is still Anglo-Saxon. The country was subjected to the imprint of that rigidity of moral judgment and "legalism" of social sanctions of which British tradition affords the most striking examples. Puritan models reign supreme in art, literature, the theatre, and daily life.¹

This tendency to "legalism," to the search in legal statutes for a universal panacea for all ills and abuses, even at the price of the sacrifice

¹ Though it may be true that as to *temperament* the American may not be more Anglo-Saxon than French (M. Rodrigues says that he is less so, p. 14), when we consider the social factors of the national culture—moral beliefs, religious faith, language, law-traditions, practices—we must maintain that American life, even to-day, is much more closely related to that of the Anglo-Saxons.

of individual rights and privileges, no doubt comes in the first place from British tradition; but it has been reinforced by two specific influences: first, the conditions under which American institutions were developed, and next, the political duality of allegiance of the American citizen.

The early colonial settlements insisted, at first in the Eastern States, and later in those of the centre and in the "Far West," upon the vigorous maintenance of rules already rigorous in themselves, and at the same time the relinquishment of individual liberties in the face of the exigencies of internal order and collective defense. Justice was rendered with an iron hand, for the individual did not count when the good of the community was in danger.

Later, in view of the great independence of the several States with respect to the national government (an independence emphasized by M. Rodrigues), the individual found himself plunged into all sorts of uncertainties and ambiguities on the subject of his rights and duties. He ran up against the laws on all sides, laws often themselves conflicting, one overriding the other, and very frequently inapplicable.¹ The

¹ It is difficult for me to agree with M. Rodrigues when he seems to say (p. 147) that conflicts between State and national governments have never led to an appeal to force. The Civil War of 1861-5 is

result is that the law, the legal statute, becomes an instrument of reform, of repression, of progress. The American demands that a law be voted, and imagines that he has done his whole duty. Now as this complex of laws, State and national, is subject to the influence of a puritanistic, and often injudicious, morality, one may easily imagine the confusion that results.

Each State seeks to surpass the other States, to show itself more "Christian," less "covenanting with evil," to appear more "progressive" than its neighbors. National legislators are urged to be not less "advanced," with the fine result that most ill-prepared and least-considered measures are proposed in Congress and often passed, at the risk of being abrogated by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional.

In the past few years this kind of legislation has entered the industrial domain—that in which, it must be admitted, the need of reform has been most keenly felt—and in certain cases has paralyzed the active factors of the economic life of the country. The "muck-rakers" have

precisely the result of such a conflict—a conflict between the rights of States (right to secession) and of the Federal Union. It was settled by arms. Other menacing situations have arisen from conflicts of jurisdiction: for example, the right of the Japanese in California to attend the public schools of that State by virtue of a national treaty; the right of the national government to maintain order by force in a particular State; the right of extradition; the regulation of commerce between the States, etc.

scented abuses everywhere, and the State legislators made every effort to outrun one another in a headlong race toward a so-called "regulation" of great enterprises. The "trusts," whether good, bad, or indifferent, have been prosecuted; the railways have been shackled and oppressed by arbitrary measures, such as the fixing of tariffs, the limitation of combinations *inter se*, and the prohibition of certain forms of investment, until at last a real crisis has paralyzed the business of transportation. Preparations for the present war are paying the price of all this "virtuous" legislation¹ to which the industry of yesterday and the day before has been subjected.

It is, therefore, not only in the social and moral life of the United States that individualism is little developed. The fresh and vigorous power of initiative, so justly pointed out by M. Rodrigues, has also been enfeebled by the enervating and sterilizing fever of moralization of

¹ Among examples of this ill-considered legislation are: the "Beveridge child labor law," the "Mann law" on the white-slave traffic, the various extreme measures taken in the interest of prohibition or in behalf of feminism. The two great political parties outvie one another in suggestions more advanced than those of the "Progressive" party itself. The "initiative," the "referendum," the "recall of judges" are proposals of this sort. As M. Rodrigues points out, there is no country in the world where such measures are less to be desired. The country needs a really conservative party, as a makeweight against all this governmental interference, whether State or national, in private affairs and social life.

the country through the great increase of legislative measures.

Even to-day this aspect of American affairs is still striking, though somewhat less apparent. I think it ought to be mentioned because it indicates an orientation which has, perhaps, not been sufficiently brought to light by the author. No doubt this tendency, in matters of commerce and industry, does correct real abuses of a far too self-seeking individualism, and when kept within due limits, does produce results on the whole salutary for the country.

As for the idealism which must be recognized in Americans, it is, as M. Rodrigues very well says, in a large measure unconscious. It is an effort toward success, realization, creation; an effort inspired by the idealistic motives of justice and duty. It is not consciously directed toward an end, but acts by virtue of an inward impulse, in which force and right are mingled, the individualistic instincts of the business man side by side with the puritan conscience.

In this sort of idealism, as in his individualism, the American shows the defects of his qualities. He is restless, absorbed, unreflecting; an incomplete creature. He has little time for personal culture, and little taste for it; the tran-

quill joys of family life and communion of spirit in the calm realm of art touch him little. His traditional seventh day of reflection is now entirely claimed by the Sunday newspaper, with its fifty to a hundred pages of sensational news. All this produces in him an unfortunate "fluidity" of mind, manifested in that "motor type" which unceasingly demands a panorama of things to see, and which, in fact, *sees* none of them. He has no specialty outside of his business, is interested in nothing, knows not what to do with his leisure. His vacations bore him, his recreations wear on his nerves, the approach of old age terrifies him. When at last he retires from business, he suffers frightfully from lack of occupation, and finally returns to business in order to "die in the harness." One cannot be surprised at the amazement of Matthew Arnold, or the wonder of Pierre Loti, the former coming from the peaceful home of classical English literature, the other from the torpor and dreamy contemplation of the Orient, on finding themselves plunged into this maelstrom of energy, set in motion by a mechanism which, in their eyes, was without basis, significance, or value.

Thence follows another trait, the eminently superficial character of many aspects of Ameri-

can life. On all sides "haste makes waste." Everything is done by steam, on the spur of the minute, and for immediate use. The traveller is struck by the wooden buildings, the fragile bridges, the provisional character of the arrangement of all sorts of material; studious men are impressed by a like haste, a like absence of foundation, in American teaching, research, and education. The American makes something that will "do the business," expecting to replace it to-morrow. Each type of machine, automobile, bicycle, must present a new model every year, showing some modification or claiming to be an improvement. "New things" are constantly demanded, "new thought," a "new educational method," the "new woman," the "new freedom"—and this in matters in which that which has value is not new, and that which is new has no value. Change becomes the sign of progress.

Politically, the American ideal sins by shortness of view and lack of precision. The Constitution, wisely interpreted by the Supreme Court, has become the breviary of political truth and the charter of political rights. But the practical predominance of "States' rights" up to the Civil War, and the tradition of national isolation vaguely formulated by the Monroe

Doctrine, have produced a certain lukewarmness in national interests, and a certain apathy with respect to international matters. Hence results a remarkable popular heedlessness joined to an almost exclusive preoccupation with personal and internal affairs. As M. Rodrigues says, a national conscience as such hardly exists except in times of crisis. The national device *E pluribus unum* would better read *IN pluribus unum*, insisting more strongly upon the plurality of the States than upon the unity of the nation.

Furthermore, this feeble national sentiment has been nothing less than strengthened by the presence of a great mass of foreigners, but partly assimilated, and drawn to the country, not like the Pilgrim Fathers, by motives of conscience, but entirely by selfish motives and the desire for profit.¹

Nevertheless, in spite of this indifference to national interests, a remarkable impulse toward unification and the fusion of States has manifested itself, especially since 1865. I do not believe there is a single country, approaching ours in extent, where there is so little real "sectionalism," in the sense of local differences in customs, sentiments, fundamental religion, and

¹ I think I ought here to add these reasons to those which M. Rodrigues has given (chap. III, sec. 3, *The Union*), for the inadequacy of the national sentiment.

philosophy of life. Everything, even to the pressure exercised by the practical and economical affairs of the country, has contributed to this result. In its industry, its civic organization, its internal relations of all sorts, as in its language, customs, and manners, the country gives proof of a surprising unity. Upon this point I think that in certain passages of his book, for example, the one in which he compares the United States to a "boarding-house" rather than a "home," M. Rodrigues goes too far.¹ No doubt the American often changes his street, his city, or his State, but this, to him, is simply *to change his room in the house*; he still keeps his address "America."²

As for the Constitution, its general character and essential lack of precision make it an admirable instrument of constitutional development in the hands of the Supreme Court. The judges are divided into "strict construc-

¹ See also the comparison of the States with centrifugal forces.

² I should love to comment upon the author's remarkable discussions of the President and the Constitution, but space is wanting. Perhaps he esteems the constitutional power of the President beyond its worth, for a vote of two-thirds of the Senate can neutralize his *veto*, and the Supreme Court can maintain a law that has been *vetoed*. The President has no right to introduce a bill directly, and when his party has only a small majority in Congress, his *indirect* initiative (by means of a leader of his party) may meet with difficulties, or even prove abortive. A comparison of the President with the Pope is not, in all respects, happy, for the President's influence is popular and moral, in its origin as in its sanctions, and not *autocratic* or *theocratic*.

tionists" and "free constructionists"; these last, among whom was the great jurist John Marshall, bring to new questions the spirit rather than the letter of the document, and give successive decisions which, taken as a whole, form the great body of American constitutional law. Once rendered, a decision of the Supreme Court has the authority of a precedent.

The duty of the judge in the lower courts is not to decide upon the validity of the constitutions, whether of State or nation (as M. Rodrigues appears to indicate), but simply to interpret and apply them with other laws. Appeal upon the ground of constitutionality of a law or a decision is always possible; but such appeal must be brought before the Supreme Court. In the case of a new law the ordinary procedure is as follows: a person or a society intentionally violates the new law, in order to be prosecuted under this head. This establishes a "test case," which obliges the court to utter a decision. Some of the most important decisions in the annals of American jurisprudence have been obtained by means of such "test cases."

Concerning international matters the American manifests a very marked political docility; he is always ready to follow the President. The American people have never failed to respond

to a direct and energetic appeal from Washington in a matter of foreign politics. In the present war, of the two hypotheses formulated by M. Rodrigues (pp. 157 and 186), the second appears to me more just than the first; by this I mean that he is correct in saying that if the President had not decided upon war the nation might have remained neutral; but not in saying that "the President had great difficulties to overcome in winning the country to the idea of intervention." The truth appears to me to have been at once finely and truly expressed by a writer in a French newspaper: "Mr. —, according to all appearance, contributed to enlighten, as to the true character of the conflict, the mind of the President, upright, methodical, but badly informed on European matters."¹ In the interest of a correct historic documentation I may here call to my support the opinion of a prominent New York newspaper, which thus indicates the factors in the American decision: "in the first place the best minds in the country convinced the people, then both acting together, and aided by the Germans, convinced the President."

Thus, the portrait drawn in this book faithfully reproduces, in my opinion, the features of

¹ R. C., *Journal des Débats*, August 8, 1917.

the American, especially as he was in the preceding generation. As to the defects of the Americans, insufficient command of their energy, a too exclusively practical character, a too conventional morality, a too utilitarian and pragmatic conception of existence—if I raise all these points here it is to show why we Americans, while accepting the praise of M. Rodrigues, should fall into no error as to its meaning.

The author marvellously brings out the method of the American people when he says that their idealism is concrete and “schematic,” not “conceptual.” All these words from his pen are terms of a rigorously precise psychological signification.

The psychology of the experimental and “schematizing” imagination is the following: it is that type of imagination which consists in making current use of what one supposes, *as if* it had been established. Men treat hypothetical propositions *as if* they were true; mere probabilities *as if* they had already been verified; fictitious images *as if* they had been confirmed by facts; concrete peculiarities *as if* they were universal. They directly make use of all these “schematic” ideas and images, yielding themselves to them in all confidence. The act reveals how much they are worth. The agent

makes no lament over his dreams, does not stop to correct his erroneous conjectures, but, gathering in his successes in hot haste, and passing over the failures, plunges again into the whirlpool of life. His progress is real, but experimental, empirical, pragmatic. He never goes to the bottom of the details of a situation; they do not interest him. Thus he never attains to the *concept*, the universal idea established and brought to the point.

And so on indefinitely. The man of action is forever throwing the dice and gathering in the gains of the gambler. His preferred method being experimentation by action, the greater number of American discoveries are found in the domain of practical invention.

This psychological method is recognized by the lack of equilibrium, the poverty of reflection, and the incomplete culture of the great generality of Americans. They have only one means of improving upon it: let them learn to think by the aid of adequate concepts, to correct and complete their hasty and truncated "instantaneous views" of life and things. The American should set himself to study his errors, his failures, to put himself in the position of the spectator of the result of his efforts, to consider the "why" and "why not" of this and that, as

well as he has learned the "how to do" one thing, and "how not to do" another. He should learn to love the universal, the truth and the beauty of which the schematic image is only a happy approximation, even when it chances to be correct.

Hence the extreme importance for the American of a close contact with the older and more reflecting cultures of Europe, which his temperament enables him to appreciate, but from which the force of circumstances has kept him too long apart. French culture, the culture of the country which has made the most profound criticism of art and of life, and the largest generalizations in the political order, which has the most patiently tested the worth of scientific hypotheses, which is capable of the most marvellous clarity of explanation, by itself alone sufficient to dissipate obscurity and put confusion to flight—this culture will give new vigor to the wonderful means of intellectual perfecting which to-day are so strongly rooted in the soil of the United States—to those great private universities, those foundations for scientific research and for pure science, those luminous directing personalities, more numerous every year, who commend and who practise the reflective life. For it is something extraordinary to see with what a true in-

stinct the resources of art, of literature, and of science are now put to profit by Americans.

As to their intellectual productiveness, the rank which the United States now occupies in art, science, and literature is not, by universal consent, lower than fourth among all the nations of the world.

To these fortunate influences will soon be added those which will issue from the war. The influences of this war upon the United States will be considerable both from the political and the moral point of view. They will tend to correct one of the defects which I have pointed out, the lack of unity and strength in the national sentiment, the absence of a definite political tendency.

After the war we shall no longer see the nation groping for an international political faith, nor satisfying with vague and purely negative maxims of isolation and indifference its great desire to play its part in the world. It will have felt the impulse of a national mission, an impulse which responds to the pulses of the great arteries of the common life of the world. Never again will the name American be the synonym of neutrality based upon economic interests, complacent ignorance, and egotistic ambition at a time when the moral value of

human liberty and the rights of man are at stake.

The political ideal of the Frenchman, "freedom guided by insight" (*la liberté guidée par la raison*—it is in these words that I define it), and the Englishman's ideal of vigorous moral enthusiasm will both find in America a soil prepared to receive the seeds of the future alliance of free peoples, an alliance to which the United States will bring as a tribute their mediatizing conception: "Liberty armed with law."

J. MARK BALDWIN,
Corresponding Member of the Institute.

PREFACE TO THE FRENCH EDITION

It is my wish to point out here the reasons that led me to write this book.

First of all, I have desired to do justice to a great, a very great people, too often misunderstood even by those who most admire them. If they are great materially, they are greater still, whatever may be thought of them, morally and ideally. Not having found the way to penetrate their outer shell, few of us have reached their soul.

Upon this soul I have sought to throw light. I have not so much tried to make it understood as to give an intuition of it, for it does not speak to the intelligence; it is an emotional, impulsive soul, at whose touch we ourselves must in some sort be moved. I have tried, so far as I have myself found it through the works of writers, the acts of statesmen, and especially through the ardor which carries along this whole people, to tune myself to their diapason, and if possible to bring into the same accord those who may be led to read these pages.

It is a fresh, new soul. Above all else in love with reality, it retains only such thoughts as lead to action. But it faces life with an ardor, an impetuosity which is an example and a lesson to our refined and somewhat weary mentality, a lesson of energy which, on the morrow of this war, Europe will need for her regeneration.

In fact, I have most of all at heart to show what we may expect of America. For I believe that the services which she will render to us will be immense.

I am not speaking merely of her military measures, which surpass our most daring forecasts, nor of the support of her forces, which will be decisive. Not to say that her coming to the relief of the French troops who for more than three years had been standing in the breach, taking her share, her large share, of the common sacrifice, is a noble act; it is more; it is symbolic, and it brings to mind another. After a century and a half General Pershing has come to help us form the *United States of the World* as General Lafayette went to contribute to the formation of the *United States of America*. The important thing is first to conquer; but afterward and especially to organize humanity. The part of America in the war appears great,

but that which she is called to play in the peace of to-morrow is unprecedented.

What that to-morrow will be no one can say with certainty. But what it will not, what it must not, be we already know. It must not be like yesterday. This war can have no other issue than a total and definitive winding up of the past. In the eyes of future historians the twentieth century will, no doubt, appear as one of those decisive epochs in which a world vanishes and a new world takes its place. Perhaps it will be the era of emancipation in which civilization will have forever triumphed over barbarism. For the time being, at least, as profound a revolution will have occurred as that which the introduction of Christianity accomplished for men. Through carnage and massacres, over heaps of ruins and piles of dead bodies, humanity discerns and with utmost desire summons peace, final, immutable peace, organized by justice and in liberty.

An immense hope has passed over the earth.

But that this hope shall become a reality, it will be necessary to proceed to a complete recasting of the world. For this it will not suffice to work over the map of the globe, to substitute frontiers of Right for those of Force. Man as a whole must be inwardly transformed. A new

human type must be created, as different from the so-called civilized man that we know as the latter is from the savage or the caveman. Every notion of war, of territorial ambition, of violence done to the liberty of peoples, must vanish from our minds. In short, the man must come into being.

A gigantic task, perhaps, the work of a long time, but by no means a utopian task. And of this task America, by the organ of its President, has had a clear vision, proclaiming at the same time her inflexible resolution that it shall be performed. The programme that she brings us is a programme of definitive pacification and universal brotherhood. While repeating what from her birth she has not ceased to say to us, "America for Americans," "Europe for Europeans," she now adds, "Humanity for man."

Who, better than she, has the right so to speak? Is not her whole history, her brief history, the effort first to set free and then to develop the human personality? Has she not subordinated everything to this end? Where else does the individual find greater possibilities of realization, whether in himself, in his spirit emancipated by education in liberty, or all about him in the free family, the free State, the free Union? The United States of America is the

only nation in the world which has not had to break its own chains (save those of the slaves of the South, and to do this she rose up against herself), for with her, and only with her, man has always been a citizen, never a subject.

It is true that this people, like all others, has its defects, and they are great; its solutions of continuity, and they are enormous. An unfinished but incomparable nation, it has produced a type of man which is incomplete, but also incomparable. What matters all that for the time being he lacks, so long as he has at his disposal the means of acquiring it? While every effort of autocratic and despotic Germany is to stifle the man in us, leaving alive only the animal with his instinct for pleasure, and the slave with his habit of submission, that of America is, on the contrary, according to Auguste Comte's fine expression: "To free our humanity from our animality."

This is what she is bringing to the world, the hope, no, the assurance, of human emancipation. This is the profound significance of her joining in the struggle. This is what will prolong her effort far beyond the limits of the war. This is why, this is wherein she appears as a great *idealistic* force, which proposes that its ideal shall not remain a beautiful dream, but is

putting forth a gigantic effort to make of it a near and effective reality.

But to this general human interest, which I have found in bringing to light the real physiognomy of America and the part which she seems to me to be called to play, is added in my eyes a more direct and immediate interest for us Frenchmen.

Our two countries seem to me to be called to understand one another; I would add, to love one another. There are between them closer affinities than between any other two nations of the Entente. Both are the countries of the Right. Both have made the human individual the end of human society. Both have made an effort to realize, not merely to proclaim, the grand Republican device, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." Both, finally, have always believed that on the triumph of their ideal depends at once the welfare of their country and the prosperity of the human race.

In the course of my work I have more than once had occasion to point out one or another of these points of contact between us. They, on their side, have also felt themselves nearer to us than to our allies. If they are loyally united to all of them, they are something more for us: they are the friends of France.

At the time of the late visit of the French Mission to the United States, in the midst of the enthusiasm of the popular ovations, an American thus exquisitely expressed the sentiment with which we inspired them: "France is the sweetheart of the world." America does not propose to let her heart cease to beat. She knows too well that, France dead, the world would perish.

She proposes even more: so to perform that her heart shall beat more strongly than ever, that its pulsations, for a little while weakened, shall again throb with a generous influx of newly quickened blood. She is ready, with all her strength, to help us work toward the economic reinstatement of our country, our incomparable country, which has passed through so many crises, always to come forth more valiant, with energies newly tempered by trial.

Thus between us and them is being prepared the creation of something more and better than an alliance, an intimacy. They had somewhat forgotten us, during these latter years; let us perform our *mea culpa*, we had somewhat caused ourselves to be forgotten by them; we had somewhat too much forgotten ourselves. The long peace which for them had been so full of activity had been for us too idle and empty.

They had almost forgotten the colors of our flag, which they hardly ever saw flying in their seaports. But how we found ourselves, and found one another, in the hour of danger! After the Marne, Verdun revealed us to them as a people no longer to be suspected. We amazed them, compelling them to recognize that which is the fundamental genius of our race, our faculty of revivification.

This is the genius of our race, and also of theirs. We, France and America, are the two great creative Powers. Creation is with us more intellectual: we bring forth an idea and sow it broadcast through the world; they, more crude and materialistic, deluging their own country and the whole world with their products, while producing them have caused the idea to spring forth. But neither they nor we are plagiarists and imitators, peoples who follow. The discoveries of both of us are drawn from our own capital, not borrowed or stolen from others. France has her Pasteur, America her Edison. What names can Germany put face to face with these?

We are, therefore, made to understand and to complete one another. Let us ask of America her vigor and competitiveness, and in exchange

let us give her our culture and the "sweetness" which she has recognized in us. Let us refine her and let her virilize us.

In order to do this, on both our parts, our effort should tend to strengthen and multiply our relations. Let there be between us a series of exchanges of all kinds, intellectual as well as material. Happy results in this direction have already been obtained. The United States have heard the voices of a few of our university men, and they have enabled us to hear the voices of theirs. But this is only a first step. We must create common organs, and even more, perhaps, centres of common thought, and this in all domains, in commerce, in industry, in the press, in the university. On the morrow of the war "American tours" must be organized for our French students, and "French tours" for the students of America. There must be a thorough penetration and, so to speak, constant impregnation of these two peoples, one by the other. This is the work of to-morrow which it behooves us to enter upon even to-day.

Dare I say, in closing, that it is partly in the dream of such a work that I have written this book? If here, and perhaps over there, I may

have inspired a few hearts with the desire of undertaking it, I shall deem myself lavishly paid for my labor, and shall judge that my effort will not have been useless.

G. R.

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THE PEOPLE OF ACTION

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CHAPTER I

AMERICA AND THE CONDITIONS OF ITS EXISTENCE

PREJUDICE AGAINST THE UNITED STATES.—
AMERICAN REALISM AND IDEALISM

AMERICA has been twice discovered: physically by Christopher Columbus, morally with President Wilson. And the second discovery was no less unexpected, nor is it less valuable, than the first.

Popular imagination lives upon legend: America is a fabulous Eldorado; the Yankee is a materialist, eager for gain, his mind closed to every generous idea; a "dollar-hunting animal," a money-making machine to whom all methods are good. If people work hard on the other side of the Atlantic their labor is mechanical and with no outlook. The United States is an immense workshop; the prodigious activity there manifested is exercised for the gratification of crude and elementary instincts.

This rather too simple picture has the defects of a caricature without its good qualities; it

distorts what it portrays. It gives no suggestion of the still more formidable moral energy which gives impulse to this formidable accumulation of physical energy. There is, indeed, a prodigious industrial activity in the United States, but it is set in motion by an idea, and is placed at the service of an idea. In the American we must see, not a *materialist* eager for enjoyment; he is very precisely the contrary, an *idealist* in search of results. In fact, there is no productive realism without a latent idealism. In order to realize there must be first a conception, a spirit of invention, a taste for research, a desire for the better, underneath all, a sense of the ideal.

But it must be confessed that this ideal is different from ours; it is original, unexpected, well adapted to disconcert the mind of a Frenchman or a European. To understand it we must do violence to our prepossessions and try first of all to place ourselves in the midst of the very special conditions, unknown to previous history, which presided at the birth of the United States. These conditions we shall endeavor to bring to light.

I

HISTORIC CONDITIONS

The United States have no historic past.—Their freedom from national hatred.—Colonial origins.—Subordination and elimination of the indigenous element.—Immigration and the juxtaposition of races.—No English hegemony.—America not Anglo-Saxon.—American patriotism.—Federalism and particularism.—The “faculty of absorption” of the United States.—The American *patrie* in process of becoming.

America is a new country, that is to say, a country without a past, and by so much without a history. It has enjoyed the privilege—for it is one—of having been from birth open to civilization without having known barbarism. There is nothing like it in our Old World, for the very reason that it is old. Upon Europe lies a heavy weight, the glorious burden of centuries.

Glorious burden, we say, for the past survives itself in the present, and bars the way to the future. In every domain, intellectual, political, social, national, and international, the forces of conservatism, not to say of reaction, rear themselves before the forces of progress. It becomes necessary to destroy before building.

The United States have nothing to destroy. They came into being, as their true creator him-

self acknowledged, at a "fortunate moment."¹ "The formation of our empire dates back, not to a dark period of ignorance and superstition, but to an epoch when the rights of the human race were better understood and more clearly defined than at any earlier time."² Everything smiled upon their dawn, the works of philosophers and legislators, the culture of letters, the development of education, the extension of commerce, the transformation of industry. America was born with civilization.

Consequently, she has avoided the three snares which we deem the most threatening. She knows nothing: 1, of *national hatred of rival nationalities*; 2, of *moribund forms of government*, more or less infected with the virus of autocracy; 3, of *antiquated methods of production*. She knows nothing of what we may term "the European uneasiness." In our old Europe the modern states are not sufficiently modernized. Their efforts at emancipation take the method of violent agitation: with the outer world, wars; at home, revolutions, either political or industrial, and by that fact social.

Let us imagine, on the other hand, a privileged nation, coming into existence at the very time when the physical progress of science and the

¹ Quoted from Washington, by J. Fabre, *Washington*, p. 256.

² *Ib.*, p. 256.

intellectual progress of the human mind have made a clean sweep of routines and prejudices. Let us grant to it, with the inexperience of youth, all its freshness, its illusions, and its ardor for the fray. It rises with a bound to the point to which other peoples have attained only by slow and painful effort. Well, such a nation exists, and its name is the United States. Emerson recognized it. "The new conditions of humanity in America are really favorable to progress, to the elimination of absurd restrictions and ancient illegalities."¹

First of all, America knows nothing of national hatreds. Two reasons may be given for this: she is not face to face with another people with whom to fight; she is herself a people in the way of perpetual formation and transformation, rather than a people already formed.

America does not know what a foreigner is. She began by being a colony. Now, in a colony there are, properly speaking, no foreigners; there are only natives and colonists. The latter, whencesoever they have come, soon forget their origin and merge themselves into a society. As for the native, not only is he excluded, he is hardly considered to be a man.

Now, the foreigner is a man like ourselves; if we have a quarrel with him we settle it by

¹ Emerson, *Essays*.

arms. We treat him as an enemy, that is to say, up to a certain point an equal. For even war itself, however it may substitute the rule of fact for the rule of law, is not without some legal character. The proof of this is that the vanquished is treated with, not exterminated. He was the *hostis* of the Romans, who even in defeat still preserved a personality, a legal character.

Nothing of the sort prevails with the native, our "savage," the equivalent of the ancient *barbaris*. With him is recognized no law, however minimized; he is a thing and not a person. Consequently he is treated as such, is considered as a means, not an end. Negro or redskin, he is a slave, a "living tool," to be subjugated and expropriated. The very principle of colonization is that the native is not an equal. And even in our days, though slavery is legally abolished, colonial wars are still fundamentally distinct from wars between civilized men. Whence comes the revolt which the present proceedings of Germany has aroused in the universal conscience? Essentially from this one fact, that she treats her civilized adversaries as if they were savages, and the nations of Europe as if they were colonies.

Now, when planting itself in America the

white race came in contact with no foreigners with whom to fight. There was a struggle, but not of one nation against another nation, but of a nation against savages. The native has always been looked upon as an outlaw, and has very soon been made an out-life, if the word may be coined. Almost everywhere he has disappeared. The few fragments of the original race which yet remain represent only the smallest fraction of the population of the United States. Pushed back and enclosed in a corner of the immense territory of the Union, they form, from every point of view, a negligible quantity. As for the negroes imported from Africa, if we find them in swarms in the Southern States, there enjoying in theory the same social and political rights as the whites, it is well known that in fact they are reduced to impotence, and in all places, at the theatre, on the railroad and the tramway are separated from the real Americans as by a water-tight compartment. Even if the feeblar race that originally peopled the territory of the United States had survived, they would have been practically annihilated, as in India or Africa, by the *emprise* of the stronger race. The expropriation would not have been less thorough.

Thus the civilized men who have spread

themselves over North America as a drop of oil spreads, have nowhere encountered other groups of civilized men constituted as a nation. Their very wars, most rare from this fact, have a special character all their own. The War of Independence was waged against a tyrant, the War of Secession against fellow citizens. Both of them, the first hardly less than the second, were civil rather than national wars. And take it all in all, the young America, instead of being, like the old Europe, an enclosed field for combat, has seemed from its earliest hours to be a free field, clean-swept for the exercise of all activities.

A second and even more favorable condition existed at the beginning, and by a happy and continually recurring chance has been maintained throughout the entire life of the New World, so brief as it has been. There was not, there is not now, and doubtless there never will be, in the United States the overlordship of a dominant race, subordinating to itself the fragmentary elements of other and less numerous peoples. There was, there still is, from all directions an influx of European, not to say of world, energies: English, French, Italian, Japanese, Irish, Polish, Russian Jew, etc., at first

settling down side by side, then mingling, near the Atlantic shores or on the plains of the Far West. And if by this procedure the United States have come to bear a slight resemblance to the Tower of Babel, this only proves that the Tower of Babel had its good points.

In fact, these simultaneous or successive layers, even when for a time they retained their original physiognomy, never clashed, but rather harmonized as they settled side by side. It cannot be said that they blended, but rather that, on the whole, they developed along parallel and relatively independent lines. Falling into a rhythm which is that of American life itself, they mutually adapted themselves to one another, and became, as it were, cemented together. They geared themselves together like the wheels of an immense machine, complicated yet pliable, and became one. They do not blend like streams which mingle their waters and are lost in one river; it is somewhat characteristic of America that its several parts preserve each its own character while receiving the common imprint of the whole. Independence and interdependence of intertangled yet distinct elements appears to be the law that rules this complex which is the United States.

The irruption continues, the incessant influx of immigrants permits none of the groups to consolidate and take precedence of the others in economic or political power. America is the product of these sporadic efforts; it appears to be a sort of vortex into which penetrate and are carried along currents of circulation coming from all directions, each of which falls into the general movement, making its own way among the others while carried along with them, all in the progress of the whole. Order automatically creates itself in this chaos by virtue of that power of absorption which in some manner snatches up each individual as he passes and agglomerates him with the whole. These repeated impacts, these recurring collisions, little by little disintegrate the groups which on their arrival were national, and blend their human material into a new and more compact mass, from which emerges, or rather from which will emerge, the American nation.

Not that the tie with the original fatherland of each is broken. In this new country, still in fermentation, it abides longer than in the more unified European nations. But it is looser, more supple. The embrace of the American country is strong because it is unceremonious. It seizes upon its man and will not let him go.

Even the visiting foreigner barely escapes it. Huret had been only a few days in New York when he felt himself won over by his surroundings. "This country's power of absorption is so great," he says, "that I am already in the way of becoming an American."¹ The desire of merging oneself into a group of his national affinity is felt here more strongly than elsewhere, but it is an instinct of self-preservation from a flood which is carrying him along by its suction. One clings to the old country all the more ardently as he is the more rapidly won over by the new. One remains partly French, English, Italian, while becoming wholly American. The very Germans cannot help being Americanized, in spite of themselves, and this not in the long run, but in a relatively short time. And thus we finally see a number of insulated groups, somewhat analogous to those which in our country are formed by associations of men originally from the Somme or from Lot-et-Garonne; they are still somewhat Picards, somewhat Gascons, and entirely Frenchmen.

Race in America has, therefore, a character all its own. It depends not upon origin, but upon result. Therefore nothing is more erroneous than the belief in an Anglo-Saxon America.

¹ Huret, *De New York à la Nouvelle-Orléans*, p. 3.

The only European people with whom the American people can be compared is our own. Not that there is much French blood in their veins—there are only a few drops of it—but because, like French blood, American blood is the result of a mixture, and, as Renan has said, the “mixed bloods” are the freshest, the youngest, the richest. Admit all the differences that you will—and they are immense—there is something in common between American and Gallic activity, between the indomitable energy of the Yankee and the *furia francese*. It is more and better than affinity of race; it is similarity of temperament. Both nations are melting-pots.

Let us add that distance, far from setting the various States of America in opposition, has drawn them together. Precluding friction, it has at the same time prevented their development into rival nations, and has effected a welding instead of a mixture. In the early days vast spaces were open to colonization. Groups of emigrants scattered themselves in every direction. Deserts often lay between these congeries in process of formation. There were no such continual interchanges as occur every day from one end of France or of England to the other. Peculiarities are, therefore, more marked here than in Europe. Each group, consuming

what it produces, and producing what it consumes, takes upon itself a local, personal, sharply defined character. Thus there are not States within the state—we shall see that the word *State* has no meaning to an American—still less nations within the nation, but autonomous organizations, somewhat similar in their several proportions to the little Greek republics of antiquity, with their special constitutions and their distinctive habits. The essential difference is that America is not a country, but a world. The city or the district is formed by the juxtaposition of individuals; the State by the juxtaposition of cities or districts, the Union by the juxtaposition of States. The tie is rather federal than national, or rather, nationality is here understood only under the form of federation.

As a result there are at once fewer resemblances and fewer competitions among neighboring groups. In this America, which began by being a mosaic (and which has not entirely ceased to be one), interests are various but easily become solidary; in Europe, on the other hand, they are analogous and strongly opposed. The various European nations, confined in narrow territories, stifling within their frontiers, live always upon a war footing, even in times of

peace. The United States, at large upon their immense continent, hardly knowing what a frontier properly is, in a country where the boundaries of States are drawn by a plumb-line like the checker-board streets of their towns, having in their recent past few bloody memories and few germs of conflict, are before all else preoccupied with themselves, and mutually concern themselves little with their respective destinies. But, when occasion occurs, they are prompt to unite upon any matter of interest, urged not so much by a sentiment of patriotism, at least not at the outset, as guided by the precaution of the business man. It is a marriage of reason, not of inclination. Issuing from a "hodge-podge" of multicolored elements, they constituted themselves on the principle of every man for himself, and when they agreed to unite, individuals and groups of individuals added themselves together like the units of a sum, rather than organized themselves like the members of a living body.

Their unity, at least their original unity, is then more external, though not more artificial, than that of the nations of the Old World. It consists above all in a series of interchanges, a sort of economic mutual aid, rather than in a totality of common aspirations. The latter are

slow to come, and even to this day have not been completely formulated. At the very least, communion of thought first arises from a community of interests. In their case it lacks—if this be not quite as much a good quality as a fault—the two features of what may be called the ancient patriotism. America knows nothing of that offensive and defensive patriotism which is born of the sentiment of envy or the sense of danger, for she has no territorial ambition, and therefore is a menace to no one; and not believing herself to be an object of foreign covetousness (up to the present time, at least) has felt herself menaced by no one. Neither has she, or but imperfectly, what may be called internal patriotism, resulting from a common origin, a long tradition which each one cherishes *for himself*, for his fireside, his *home*, for she was born of yesterday, formed of dissimilar elements drawn from the four corners of the globe; to those who tread her soil she does not as yet afford the intimacy of a home or the warmth of a fireside. The European lives in his house; the American builds his. To the inhabitant of the United States his country is still somewhat of a “boarding-house.” In the matter of patriotism as in all else, America is a new country.

But it would be profoundly unjust to conclude from this that the national sentiment is less strong here than elsewhere. It is different, more poignant still, perhaps, because it is younger and less consolidated. Like most of the sentiments of this effervescent mass, it is in the way of perpetual becoming, and incessant realization. It is a patriotism which is "being made," and not a "ready-made" patriotism. To the American the *patrie* is not behind him in a venerated past, it is before him, in a future which he foresees and is helping to bring into being. "Go ahead!" The old device is truer here than anywhere else. The American is moving toward his *patrie*, and creating it by the very movement in which he seeks for it.

Thus we should not ask him too insistently what he loves in his homeland, for he would be somewhat embarrassed to tell you. Our European *patries* have fixed contours, a physiognomy long ago determined. We love them as the child loves the long-familiar features of the mother who gave him life. Contrariwise, the American *patrie*, born but yesterday, is still in process of formation. The American bends over her as the mother over her new-born child, seeking to distinguish in her vaguely sketched features the form that they will take to-morrow.

He is conscious that she is his work, that she comes forth from him rather than he from her. His *patrie* is, more than anything else, a will to be, a part of his own will, a hope rather than a reality, and a hope to be realized. He will realize it. That is his true reason for being.

Thus, from each autonomous group, and from each individual in each group, springs an impulse which contributes to the making of the nation. America is itself that impulse. She is going forward. Whither? The question is without meaning. She is going, without asking herself toward what end, for that will be determined as she realizes herself. The philosophy of William James, that metaphysician of action, that of M. Bergson in France, all doctrines of liberty and indetermination, help us to understand her. America is a sort of "Creative Evolution," great with all possibilities without expressly pursuing any one. She produces for the sake of producing, and in order to produce herself, as the effect of a superabundance of life, of an overabundance of energy, which feels the need of expending itself. To make something new, and to make herself new, these are her faith and her force. Her movement does not follow a road already traced; the road traces itself as the movement goes on.

Furthermore, it is not a case of *one* uniform, unilinear movement. The "vital impulse" is not a single push, made once for all. It has its source in a multitude of individual energies, not concerted, not even recognizing one another, upspringing from all sides, exploding in every direction. The progress of America is comparable to that of a huge rocket in its flight heavenward, throwing off sparks at every point of its course. Each parcel of flame may represent one of those individual wills whose whole forms the luminous trail.

No symbol could be better chosen to represent the United States than the starry flag. The unity of America is that of the Milky Way, a long train of distinct stars carried along in a single movement, and united in one vision.

II

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The United States have no political past.—The original democracy and autonomy.—Ignorance of autocracy and centralization.

There is another reason for the rapid progress achieved by the United States. America did not, like Europe, pass gradually from barbarism to civilization. "America was discovered after

the extinction of the feudal disease, so that *the people had a good point of departure.*"¹ She did not have to grope her way amidst accumulated obstacles. "The great advantage of the Americans is to have arrived at democracy without having to suffer democratic revolutions, *and to have been born equals instead of becoming such.*"² They are an adult people who were never children. America was born a major and not a minor.

In consequence America escaped the condition of tutelage which has weighed so heavily upon all other nations. Everywhere else there has been, and there still is, a conflict between governors and the governed. Such a conflict in America would have no sense.

In fact, in the strict meaning of the term, there are neither governors nor governed there; there is a people that governs itself, or rather—for the term would be incorrect—that directs its own affairs. The act by which America was constituted was an act of independence, of the emancipation of the governed from the governors, of "self-government," or rather of the rejection of all government. America affirmed herself as a union of free peoples, more jealous

¹ Emerson, *Essays*.

² De Tocqueville, *De la Démocratie en Amérique*, II, p. 236.

of their liberties than of their union. This protects that. Americans associate themselves in order to increase and guarantee their autonomy, not to abdicate it.

To escape from government is, for America, to escape from despotism, since she was under subjection to a foreign Power. But, while shaking off the detested yoke, she had no intention of placing herself beneath another. *United*, but not *unified*, States were formed. Each State preserves its sovereignty, its liberty and independence, and every power, jurisdiction, and right which is not expressly delegated by this confederation to the United States in Congress assembled.¹ In its first intention the republic was to be simply a police against foreign Powers. Now all that is asked of the police is protection, not direction. Men keep watch against its interference in matters of private life. The States kept watch against its intervention in affairs of public life. They proposed to direct themselves. In this sense there was not, and even at the present day there hardly is, anything like government in the United States.

It results that autocracy, that legacy of the past and open wound of Europe, that source of

¹ Constitution of 1777, Art. 2.

foreign wars and intestine dissensions, represents nothing to an American. He does not know what it is to have, or to have had, a master. The danger, the mere idea, of a despot, or even of sovereignty, cannot occur to the mind of citizens who are all free and all equal, belonging to free and equal States. They know the power, not of the man, but of the law; "liberty armed with law."¹ The sole authority which they respect is that of their Constitution, and their Constitution is themselves. It expresses the primitive "social contract," the adhesion, both individual and unanimous, which created them, so to say, a collective moral person. It soars above all and every one, above laws and legislators. The precarious will of changing majorities breaks itself against its immutable prescriptions. Right is above fact.

The popularity of a single man will never be dreaded, for it cannot encroach upon individual liberties. The President of the republic is endowed with plenary powers, for it is intended that the executive should have a free hand, and not be at any moment subject to the questionable control of the Houses. But his powers are very precisely those of the president of the executive committee of a joint-stock company,

¹ *Les États-Unis et la France*. Address by J. M. Baldwin, p. 167.

held to render account to the stockholders who nominated him. Elected by the people, he speaks to the people. In the United States a parliament is useless to represent public opinion; in case of need public opinion can express itself, not by intermediaries, but directly by itself. It is not, as in the Germany of to-day, or in the czarist Russia of yesterday, a merely apparent power, to be despised or put down; nor even as in France, and especially in England, a power to be manipulated, and with which one must reckon. It is the only power that counts. The President is but the guardian of the liberty of the States.

The character of the political struggles shows this. There is no reactionary party in the United States as in Europe—there is even hardly a conservative party. In fact, there is nothing to “restore,” and very little to “conserve.” The principal thing is to create. Therefore there is nothing here that resembles the imperialistic squirearchy (*Junkerthum*) of Germany, that body-guard of the Kaiser; neither is there anything analogous to the counter-revolutionists of France, dreaming of a military dictatorship in default of an impossible return to the old order. “Democrats” and “Republicans”—the two epithets are with us almost synonymous

—are at one on most essential points, and notably since the Great War the framework of both parties appears to be going to pieces. The “Socialists,” there as elsewhere, but perhaps less there than elsewhere, and in any case with less success, form a class party. But if all anticipate the future of their country differently, all turn their eyes toward the future; none of them looks toward the past. For all they will to have liberty, are moving toward liberty, and “the old is for slaves.”

Our antiquated political frippery is of no use here. Monarchy, czarism, imperialism stand for no realities in the United States; they are words having only a historic sense. Europe, to an American who crosses the ocean, is something like a museum, an old curiosity-shop, which he visits to admire its relics, and not to find an example. From the political point of view it is to him what the empire of Augustus would be to us, if it were given us to penetrate into it in our day—a reconstituted anachronism. We produce upon him the effect of people whom his country has passed by, if it could be possible to pass by those whom one has never met upon his road. The idea of the domination of a man, or a group of men, over a collectivity, is as foreign to him as that of slavery to us, the

domination of one man over another. In short, we are not living the same political life. The European moves in an atmosphere of authority and government, as the American moves in an atmosphere of freedom.

It is, therefore, sufficiently difficult for us to understand one another upon more than one point. Our social life, fixed, regulated, canalized, and disciplined, has no relation to his, relaxed, impetuous, and a little bit anarchical. This is because from their origin the United States have been enfranchised from all the servitudes that weigh upon us, whether as realities or as survivals. They have elbow-room, and where we must unceasingly struggle lest we fall back to the past, they have only to go forward.

III

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The United States have no economic past.—America was born contemporaneously with science.—Rational and not empirical character of American production.—Agriculture.—Commerce.—Industry.—The United States the land of the new and of invention.—American pluralism.—American activity.

Finally, and perhaps above all, as America has escaped subjection to governmental authority, she has not had to wrestle with economic routine.

Politically, America was born at the same time as liberty. Economically, she was born at the same time as science. She had the exceptional good fortune of coming face to face with the problem of production in a new country and with new methods. The discovery of steam and the War of Independence were almost contemporaneous. For the making of America energy would not have sufficed, a tool was also necessary. Man provided the energy, science the tool.

Science in reality dates from yesterday. To antiquity and the Middle Age it was totally unknown. In the seventeenth century it found its path with Bacon and Descartes, and showed itself "active in nature and its conqueror." But not until the nineteenth century did it show its first practical results, and the United States date from the nineteenth century.

Thenceforth nothing has hindered them, but rather everything has invited them to apply the great scientific discoveries to the exploitation of the new continent. In Europe, when *machinofacture* would replace *manufacture*, it clashed against the prejudices of some and the interests of others. Peasants, fast bound to their bits of ground, hidebound masters, benumbed with age-long habit, workingmen threatened with cruel loss of employment, leagued

themselves together against it, the first with all the force of inertia, the others organizing active resistance. Contrariwise America, poor in men, lacking in laboring force, but rich in enterprising minds, immense spaces, and inexhaustible natural forces, was clearly marked as a land of experiment in the application of new methods. She was not long in taking her place at the head of the industrial movement. It was her originality that she organized, and organized on a large scale, the substitution of rational for empirical production. Europe, which had preceded her in discovery, could only follow her, afar off and timidly, in its application.

Her principal characteristics are largeness of conception, rapidity of decision, and—in a word—audacity in execution. She goes to her labor as a soldier to the firing-line.

There is nothing like this in prudent, deliberate Europe, frugal of her resources, and, partly by necessity, partly by habit, doing things on a small scale. Is it the case of the peasant, especially in France? Long a serf, mercilessly subject to taxation and forced labor, he had remained fixed upon his glebe, had “taken root” there. Freed from slavery, his ambitions are still limited and his horizon contracted. He

deems himself well off in owning the bit of land which he formerly cultivated for another. And if he seeks to "round out his property," it is by a series of carefully considered, progressive acquisitions. He has always walked step by step. Often he, the possessor of a bit of property, has run against the possessors of other bits of property. Thence have arisen possible conflicts, possessions within the bounds of other possessions, tending to paralyze initiative and dissipate effort. As a consequence, we see so much intensive cultivation, the effort to produce much from little, instead of the attempt to produce a smaller proportion, but an infinitely larger total, by means of large undertakings of extensive culture.

When the colonist seeks the American plains what does he find? Immense reaches of land without an owner, offering infinite possibilities, but nothing to attach him to one part more than another, no past of toil and sweat to create a tie of affection between him and the soil, making the man as much the possession of the soil as the soil the property of the man. All is his, if he knows how to take it. From that moment his vision becomes a vision of conquest, of the future. Faith and hope arise in him.

But there is everything to be done, if not alone, at least in isolation, with little aid. He must, therefore, work rapidly, sow large spaces, bring the machine to replace the absent hands. Production will be smaller to the acreage, but he can extend his tillage indefinitely. As a result, being less closely bound to his glebe, he becomes less a "hand" and more a master of enterprise. Almost unconsciously he becomes more intelligent, acquires decision, initiative. Agriculture becomes modernized, industrialized. Model farms appear, where production on a large scale is carried on. So the land comes to be exploited as men exploit a mine.

Thus a race is formed. Faculties once undreamed of, or sleeping, come into play; men must needs combine, imagine, take risks, must be men and not tools. Moral progress goes on side by side with economic advance. Men who were once content to imitate, now no longer hesitate to invent. Possibilities of action stimulate ambitions, induce initiatives. Personalities and wealth are created at the same time.

The same is the case with commerce. Daring is easy where success is probable and near at hand, and in its turn success, arousing self-confidence, encourages new daring. In the

early days of this new country demand overpassed supply. A man came to a desert and founded a city; he opened a market and sold the proceeds of his ventures to the first comer. Almost or wholly without competitors, he was master of the situation. There were always needs to be satisfied, and among so active a race it was easy to create new needs. Thence arose a sort of intoxication of desire to do better, or rather, to do more; for desire for quantity took precedence of concern for quality. Men sought to develop the largest possible business, and of all sorts, for the "business man" does not specialize; he opens counting-houses and branches, speculates in land, in gold, in coal, in hogs, in railways, in securities; everything is good to him if it enlarges the field of his activity and promises a profit for his pains. One enterprise leads to another, and each special enterprise tends to develop itself, to swell, though, like the frog in the fable, it should burst in consequence.

Even more than commerce, industry is the chosen field of American activity, for it makes most visibly evident, in the most material form, the mental effort from which it derives existence. A guiding thought is evident everywhere, in the

complexities of production, in the accumulation of merchandise, in the gearing of machines, in the number of hands, in the extent of shops. Here more than elsewhere the means are ready for whoever will take them, abundance of raw material, wealth hid in the bowels of the earth, numerous and powerful natural forces, and everything in profusion. The orography of the country, its vast plains, its broad valleys, its rivers that are floating roadways, its lakes that are inland seas, facilitate the construction of lines of communication and the multiplication of methods of transportation. Doubtless all these are nothing without the individual energy that sets them in operation, but this energy is favored by circumstances. The reward is within the hand's reach; it is sure and does not delay its coming. Every one is certain that if he labors it will not be in vain, nor for a doubtful or tardy result.

Hence this industrial fever, this headlong chase after the dollar. Hence these incessant changes and this multifold production. A railroad is built, a station, around the station a few cheap houses, to-morrow it is a city, the day after to-morrow a metropolis. Monster cities, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Denver, are spontaneous creations, sometimes almost artificial.

For that matter they are little other than workshops and factories. Competition arises in the same or a neighboring city. Each manufacturer must do better than the other, and better here means more and more rapidly. Therefore he is keen on the scent of the slightest improvement; when he finds a simpler machine, succeeds in doing away with a useless movement, he scraps the old and still useful machines, and puts in new that are almost sumptuous. He has gained a few minutes, and that is enough, for a little time means much money.

Produce and replace; this is the rhythm of American industry, and also of American life, replacing products and the means of production. Automobiles are made by the hundred, in series, as in Europe not even bicycles are made. They are worth what they are worth, and they will last while they last—what matters how long? Underselling, waste, they can afford; that is life; a life intensely external, so to speak, gushing out from every pore, extracted from oneself and spread all abroad. Production and consumption are multiplied at the same time, with no attempt to establish a cautious and petty equilibrium between the two; both are pushed to the extreme, to infinitude.

This apparent disorder conceals an idea: to

“go ahead” more and more daringly; to discount the future while hustling and urging on the present. We perceive, then, the direction in which we must seek the American ideal: we shall find it in action and not in thought. The attitude of the American is not that of the *pensieroso* pursuing his inward dream, shutting himself up in his secret garden to invite and form his soul. It is that of the wrestler at grips with a reality that presses upon him on all sides, and which he has promised himself to master. He lives in a world, not of soothing dreams and enchanting illusions, but of mud, of mire, of rubbish, which he must knead with both hands if he would have it rise into material well-being and moral happiness. The task appears most revolting; it is only the more noble. Perhaps it does not satisfy high and vague intellectual aspirations, but it puts into action the robust energies of the real man, the “common man.”¹ To the European, who is too often merely the *dilettante* of thought, the American stands opposed as the pioneer of action.

The appearance of the United States, providing “the happy opportunity to create a new civilization” in conditions most appropriate to

¹ Woodrow Wilson, *The New Freedom*.

its development, permitted the making of "a new human experiment."¹ The experiment has succeeded; the new man, if not formed, is at least in process of formation.

What will he be? It is still in part a mystery, but whatever he may be, he will be of his time. To be of one's time, in this day, is not to delight oneself with adoration of a dead past, it is not even to pause in one's progress to enjoy the present. To be of one's time, in this day, is to be of to-morrow. To live is to anticipate the future; above all to create.

More precisely, to live in this day is not *to be*. Life is before all things all action and mobility. Contemporary life is no longer constituted, as formerly, under the category of being. Not that it abandons itself voluptuously to the flow of events, to an inconsistent and fluid becoming, like that which carried away old Heraclitus. On the contrary, it is energy and will. By that fact it is not stagnation; it thrusts out its feelers boldly toward all points, it radiates in every direction. It goes forward in an open universe, open to all winds, to every breeze, to every vivifying breath of air. It goes forward from all directions, also, swarming from every point of the

¹ *Ib.*

horizon, flowing in by thousands, by millions of tumultuous personalities. William James has made us understand, or rather feel, this *pluralism*. "One of the principal characteristics of life is the superabundance of life."¹ The world increases, not all at once and in a block, not according to the mechanical and regulated evolution of Spencer, but by an infinitude of special, independent acts, by numberless absolute beginnings and upspringings not to be foreseen, by bits and pieces, thanks to the contributions of its divers parts to each bit and piece.² Is not this tumult of life multiplied into infinitude, precisely the impression that America gives to whoever approaches or studies it?

In this sense America follows the very law of man, that by which he fully realizes his humanity. "Make, and making, make oneself." It does not suffice, as has been said,³ to symbolize the life of the American people by the ascent of an immense ladder. For they did not find a ready-made ladder, giving them nothing to do but climb; but in the very act of climbing they put the next rung in place, as the alpinist cuts steps in the ice, lifting himself as he may, holding on where he can, at the risk of break-

¹ William James.

² De Rousiers, *La Vie Américaine*, p. 5.

³ *Ib.*

ing his neck at each step of his ascent. The comparison is by so much the more just as the American finds life also a sport, a daring game, the object of which is only its occasion or its pretext. He does not look toward the end, as has been already said; he puts forth all his energy in the creation of the means. Each of these, when created, becomes in its turn a means of producing other means, as each peak when scaled is but the point of departure for another, higher or more difficult. The idea of an end, an object pursued, implies stability, pause. It is a European, not an American, idea. The European, when he has finished his work, rests, retires from business, and lives upon his income. The American never finishes his work, and never rests. He is not tending toward a purpose, for his sole purpose is to tend, to put forth all his strength indefinitely, unceasingly.

CHAPTER II

THE INDIVIDUAL IDEAL

THE AMERICAN AN *INDIVIDUALIST*, BUT NOT
INDIVIDUALIZED; WILL RATHER THAN
INTELLIGENCE

WITHOUT paradox one might characterize the American by saying that he is at once the most individualistic and the least individualized of all men. He is the most individualistic, the freest in intention and in fact, the most emancipated from social constraint. But this freedom of action has not yet made of him the complex, rich and differentiated individual that we find among the peoples of the ancient civilization, and of whom the Frenchman is the accomplished type. There is a uniformity of character and of taste in the United States that already impressed de Tocqueville. "One would say, at first sight, that minds have all been formed upon the same model in America, so exactly do they follow the same routes."¹ At the present day this characteristic, though modified, markedly persists.

¹ *De la Démocratie en Amérique*, II, p. 155.

Thus the remark of a great dressmaker of Paris: "If I put a new gown upon the market, out of a hundred Parisian women who adopt it ninety-nine will have it modified; of a hundred American women, ninety-nine will accept it just as it is."

It is a general law. The American proposes to realize his individuality freely and fully, but so long as he is master of his person and free to choose, he considers himself satisfied, willingly consenting that some other person, better qualified or more competent, should choose in his place. From the instant when he can do what he will, he easily wills what he is asked to will. He is let loose upon life like a colt in the pampas; like him he asks only to scamper and snort, taking without question whatever he finds on his way. His true joy is to live intensely rather than deeply. He goes, he is "a force that goes," without troubling himself to know where. We have discovered the key to his character in activity and not in intelligence, in the production of *means* rather than in the search of *ends*.

I

WEALTH

The American a "money-maker."—Contempt of "ready-made" wealth, dowry, inheritance.—Money the *criterion* of personal worth.—Money not an object of *enjoyment*, but a manifestation of *power*.—Daring of American capital.—The idealization of wealth.—Its moral action.—Its creative power.—Non-existence of the idle rich.—American philanthropy.—Its utilitarian character.—Disinterestedness of the very rich.—Voluntary self-improvement.—"It is a disgrace to die rich."

Holding by this guiding thought, one finds the way to correct many mistaken ideas; first of all, that which sees in the American only a "money-maker," a "dollar-hunting animal."

Not that either of these expressions is wholly false. They are even rigorously true if taken literally, placing the accent on "maker" and not on "money," on "hunting" and not on "dollar." In the United States the well-nigh unique object is indeed to *make* money, but in no case to find money *ready made*. In the hunt for the dollar one is interested in the sport, the hunt, rather than in the game, the dollar. The latter is rather a trophy than a gain. As Tocqueville has said, in his desire to be rich "the American is not only acting upon calculation, he is *obeying his nature*." ¹

¹ *De la Démocratie en Amérique*, II, 155.

Even more than this. There is no man in all the world who cares less for money as money. We find proof of this in the readiness with which he spends it. He simply despises our European habits of economy and simplicity, finding in them something petty, "mean." There are a thousand prodigals in America for one miser. "They waste money."¹ They do not believe that money is made to be hoarded; it is made, in the first place, for the sake of making it, and in the next, for the sake of spending, and above all, of displaying it.

It is made for the sake of making it. It must always be the product of effort, of an idea, of some sort of originality, and consequently it is *the sign of personal worth or merit*. But it must not be money picked up in the street. Americans never dream of winning the big prize in a lottery, and they refuse, not without scorn, the fortune that comes to them while they sleep. They refuse it in the form of which Europeans, and Frenchmen especially, are particularly fond—the dowry. It is true that a few daughters of billionaires cross the ocean to buy a ducal coronet with a husband thrown in; but such snobbery—for that is what it is—is the exception, even among the

¹ Cf. de Rousiers, *La Vie Américaine*, p. 323.

rich. In any case if, strictly speaking, a woman sometimes buys a husband, a man never sells himself. At his own risk and peril he seeks for a wife, *poor when he marries her*, whatever may be the fortune of her parents—a companion for life; he would blush to think of her in the light of a silent partner.

The same is the case with inherited wealth. Of course a man does not refuse it when it comes, but he does not run after it. Less than in any other country can he be sure that it will come, in this land where no situation is assured, and fortunes are made and lost with dizzying rapidity. For above all, the young American is accustomed to count only upon his own powers for his successes. No sooner is he old enough to take care of himself than he is expected, and it is his most ardent desire, to create for himself an independent situation, never to sponge upon others. "Gilded youth" and "papa's sons" are hardly known in the United States.

Wealth acquired otherwise than by one's personal effort is actually deemed a blemish. To the American his fortune should be truly a part of himself, of his substance; he must have made it in some wise a part of his flesh and blood. If it be not his work, he becomes its

slave. "He is now what is called a rich man, that is, the valet and factotum of his wealth." ¹ It is a menace to his liberty, threatening that which he has most at heart, his very reason for being; his personal dignity and independence.

Money, in fact, is of no account to an American except as it comes from himself and expresses the result of his successful activity. But when this is the case he proposes that this result shall be manifest, exhibited to all eyes. Therefore, once he has made it, he must spend it freely, ostentatiously, not only as a right, but almost as a duty, an obligation to himself. By a sense of personal dignity which takes on a form that seems strange to us, he owes it to himself to make himself respected. And money commands respect in the same proportion as it manifests power. Ostentation, in this artless form, thus takes on almost a moral character. It is a proof of effort and of success, a fine external manifestation of sovereignty. Money is a criterion; one *is worth* so many dollars. Among a nation of self-made tradesmen it is the measure, the standard, of individual worth.

But this is only the smallest use of money. It was made to be endangered, risked. It is a lever or a means. Mr. Gould, the multi-

¹ Emerson, *Essays*.

millionaire, said to M. Huret: "I do not work to make money, but to increase my power."¹ Two things may be demanded of money: either *pleasure* or *power*. The citizen of the United States cares relatively little for pleasure. Accustomed to a precocious and arduous life, he has little time to enjoy pleasure. Even had he the time he is only moderately equipped for its enjoyment. He is too young, he lacks that long past of culture and refinement, and that ornate indolence of French and Italian courts in the time of the Renaissance, which among Latin peoples made the man of taste, the *dilettante*, the amateur of supple and unusual sensations. What he wants are strong, intense sensations, and he finds them in struggle and the expenditure of energy. "Our country calls not for the life of ease, but for the life of strenuous endeavor."²

If the American exerts himself it is with the desire to shake himself free from the mass, to dominate. To plan colossal undertakings, to be the heart or the head, the vital principle of huge enterprises, is his ambition. The Frenchman says to himself, "If I were King!" and he builds castles in Spain. The American exclaims,

¹ Huret, *De New-York à la Nouvelle-Orléans*, p. 203.

² Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life*, p. 20.

"I will be King!" and he builds a factory in America. And if he happen to be successful he will, in fact, be a king, a petroleum king, steel king, railway king. The Frenchman invests his capital; the American ventures it. "In this country money is the possibility of creation."¹

But to this end he must assume risks, and capital displays a hardihood which, if we may believe Mr. Carnegie, ninety-nine times out of a hundred leads to failure. He is face to face with the problem: "Given that the object is to gain money, what shall we do to gain more money?"² This is, in fact, a question which no one dreams of discussing, which posits itself almost in the form of a categorical imperative. When Guizot said to the French *bourgeoisie*, "Make yourselves rich," he was simply giving advice. If he had been speaking to Americans he would have imposed upon them a precept. It is *a duty* to make a fortune in this land where wealth is the sole principle of admitted classification, where, as Emerson has said, men follow after deeds, after success, not after talent, but where it must be conceded success pretty generally rewards talent. It is a duty to win

¹ *La France et les États-Unis*. Address of M. Boutroux, p. 11.

² Quoted by Huret, *op. cit.*, pp. 291, 292.

the race, to beat the record. "Who has gone farthest? I would go farther," as Whitman superbly said.

Here is something great, a sort of idealization of wealth. One can understand Tocqueville paying respect to the enterprising spirit of American ship-owners. "The Americans put a sort of heroism into their way of doing business."¹ Thus understood, wealth does not corrupt the individual, it makes him sound, for it is only exceptionally, and *over and above* that he uses it for his personal satisfaction. It is a stimulant that develops intelligence as much as it utilizes energy. "Wealth is in applications of mind to nature; and the art of getting rich consists not in industry, much less in saving, but in better order, in timeliness, in being at the right spot."² It is a question not of *being* rich, but of *becoming* so; and for this the important thing is to create the opportunity, or at least to seize it as it passes, bending all the powers of one's mind toward that natural power which gives itself only to him who is able to take it. Making it his servant, man at the same time emancipates himself from the exigencies of matter and the yoke of other men.

¹ De Tocqueville, *op. cit.*, II, 414.

² Emerson, *The Conduct of Life : Wealth.*

It is in this masterful sense that we must understand Emerson's words: "He is born to be rich;¹ not to amass money, which is despicable; not to enjoy it, which is trivial; but to master himself in mastering it." The poor man, on the other hand, has only dependence and humiliation. "Poverty demoralizes. In proportion to his indebtedness the debtor is a slave."²

But this is still only a lower form of liberty—that which consists in breaking one's chains. There is another, higher and more fruitful, the liberty of action and production. The American has worked *in order to be rich*; he keeps on working *because* he is rich. He does not look forward to the time when he shall "enjoy the fruits of his labor," by eating up his income; he throws his money into the furnace and himself stirs the substance in the crucible. If he fails, he begins again; if he succeeds, success merely provides the opportunity for a new push forward. Fortune is no sinecure, and the richest men are the busiest. "It is impossible to work harder at being happy."³

Consequently, there are in the United States no idle rich, that superfluity and plague-spot of older civilizations. "Up to the present time

¹ *Ib.*, *op. cit.*

² *Ib.*, *op. cit.*

³ De Tocqueville, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

the race of men of leisure does not exist in America; every one works.”¹ The wealthy American who desires to rest has only one resource: to go to Europe, the blessed land of the *dolce far niente*. Let him go to Paris or to Florence, for in New York or “Frisco” there is no room for him. All the more surely there is none for his children. The latter will not be degenerates, for “the rich man’s son is poor,” or as good as poor. He sees in his father an example to follow, and if possible even to overpass. It will be understood how, while recognizing that bad rich men do exist in America, as elsewhere, Mr. Roosevelt is able to maintain that, all things considered, “on the whole the thrifty are apt to be better citizens than the thriftless.”²

This ardor in the pursuit of wealth does not exclude generosity, care for those who suffer, but it transforms it. The two go together, and in America we find what may be called a disinterested utilitarianism. A sense of practical realities is manifest in the benevolent enterprises of the most charitable persons. It seems entirely natural that when a philanthropist builds houses for working men his money should bring

¹ Huret, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

² Roosevelt, *American Ideals*.

him six per cent,¹ that when Doctor Keeley, in his "Cure," regenerates the race by measures known only to himself, he should keep the secret that brings him millions.² There is nothing sentimental in admiration of these proceedings; it is thought out and reasonable. In the first place it answers to the American's well-developed sense of justice; the benefactor reaps a legitimate reward, a legitimate profit, from his benefactions. It follows that the profit reacts upon the benefaction itself, making possible an enlargement of its scope, at once useful and fruitful. In such examples we see to the life one of the essential features of American morality, the ends of justice blending with those of interest.

It is true that there is still an aristocracy of wealth that does good without hope of return, men like Rockefeller, Carnegie, and many others. But their conduct springs from an analogous principle. Wealth, being an instrument of action, confers duties rather than rights, and the first of these duties is to make the most of one's tools. The directing class has a function to fulfil, it ought to "render service."³ In this land of exaggerated individualism this class considers itself, and is considered, as more

¹ Huret, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

² *Ib.*, p. 268.

³ Emerson, *Essays*.

especially representing the collectivity, which is in some sort summed up and included in the strongest personalities. "Public spirit" is, above all, incarnated in the very rich. They consider themselves less as the owners than as the depositories of their wealth. They devote their resources to the creation of schools, universities, libraries, hospitals, and charitable institutions. They even extend their action beyond the frontiers of their country. They represent first America, and then all humanity. These billionaires have, to a large degree, rescued from famine the population of Belgium and the north of France. One of them, Mr. Carnegie, has lately given tens of millions of dollars toward the rehabilitation of the invaded regions.

They make this sacrifice intelligently, and are ready to make it completely. Intelligently, for their attentive charity, always alert, is nothing less than blind. It is not the philanthropy of the "free kitchen," which, sparing the effort of the poor and the discernment of the benefactor, only prolongs poverty, and proves that "in philanthropy, as in all other branches of human activity, lack of intelligence causes as many evils as hardness of heart."¹ It is an active

¹ Roosevelt, *American Ideals*.

collaboration of the rich with the poor, an attempt at relief by work.¹

The gift may and would gladly be total. Let America to-morrow see the need of mobilizing wealth, and these billionaires will give to their last dollar. Systematically and of their own free will such men as Rockefeller and Carnegie are working toward their own ruin. Money derived from labor should, in one form or another, be restored to labor. It is a law of conscience to impoverish oneself. Mr. Choate, formerly ambassador from the United States to London, said these words, so profoundly American in spite of appearances, and repeated after him by Mr. Wilson: "The benefit of this war is that it will impoverish us."

It may be seen what remains, after analysis, of the common prejudice concerning the so-called hardness of the business man in the United States. Earnestness is not hardness. The Auvergnat dealer in second-hand goods, gathering up and hoarding, is hard in his pursuit of profit; the master of industry in Denver or Philadelphia, who calls forth something from nothing, a world from a desert, is earnest in his pursuit of the dollar. For this dollar is creative, life-giving. Wealth in America does not hide

¹ *Ib.*

itself in the woollen stocking so dear to the heart of the French peasant. It is in the street, not in the bureau-drawer. It is in the clangor of machines, the immensity of factories, the equipment of scientific laboratories. It abounds, it flows in from all sides, revolves in an incessant motion of to and fro. It seeks to be employed, and instinctively chooses the greatest risks, which are often the most rewarding. Born of energy, it creates energy. To be rich, for an American, is to be not a social parasite, but a social force.

Above all, wealth does not reside in rich men, nor in groups of rich men; at least it is not essentially in these. "America is as rich, not as Wall Street, not as the financial centres in Chicago and St. Louis and San Francisco; it is as rich as the people that make these centres rich."¹ Toward these people we must now turn our eyes to find wealth at its source. Behind wealth, that indication, let us seek the individual who made it.

¹ Woodrow Wilson, *The New Freedom*.

II

LIBERTY

The American meaning of liberty; emancipation and fullest realization of the individual.—1. *Independence*: America an "open field" for all activities.—2. *Force*: power of expansion; struggle with destiny.—3. *Will*: formation of character, effort; America the land of "hard workers."—4. *Well-being*: moral discipline and freedom of the will.

The individual, we say, and *not* the nation. In fact, the individual makes the real strength of the United States. It is the product of his ordered vigor, his tense will. Thus everything is subordinate to him—family, State, Union. He is the end to which all these divers organizations are but the means. All things are designed to insure his full self-realization, but more than them all, he puts forth his own energies to this end. In this sense his duty blends with his nature. He wills to be all that he *can* be. His ideal is the highest possible realization of his personality.

To his mind all is contained in the one word, *liberty*. But to this word he gives its fullest sense. American liberty has not its equivalent in Europe; in Europe man is subject to too many external disciplines, held by too many inward prejudices. Like wealth, liberty is for

him rather *enjoyment* than power; he seeks in it a sense of security, of "surety," as our "Declaration of Rights" has it, rather than an element of strength. The liberty that he asks for is that to which the slave aspires, who would break his shackles; it is, more than aught else, impatience of the yoke mingled with the desire for a happy life. Now the American knows nothing of the yoke; he shook it off at the outset; nor does he know much about happiness, at least in the sense in which we understand it, the ease of a quiet life, the charm of long leisure. For him, life is hard and severe, it is a combat, a "struggle." To be free is to be a victor, affirm his independence, create his "I."

Such a liberty appears complex, and on analysis resolves itself into many elements. Going from the more superficial to the more profound, it may be said that it implies four essential ideas: *independence, strength, will, and well-being.*

Independence is in some sort the negative condition of liberty, and as Descartes said of indifference, its lowest degree. It signifies simply the open road, the absence of obstacles. And this is what America willed and realized first of all. Its distinctive mark among all nations is, as Mr. Wilson said, that it is a "free field," and not a "closed field." "America

was set up that she might be different from all the nations of the world in this: that the strong could not push the weak to the wall, that the strong could not prevent the weak from entering the race. America stands for opportunity. America stands for a free field and no favor,"¹ no aristocracy, no privileged persons, each takes his chance. "America was created for the sole purpose of giving every man the same chance as every other man, to be master of his own fortunes."² Therefore no master, no guardian.

But if the American asks for independence he also accepts it, wholly, courageously, with its obligations as well as its advantages. He does not refuse subjection in order to demand privileges. He asks nothing of authority. In France we mock at it but we secretly beg its favors. Punch beats the policeman, but demands a government position. The revolutionaries of 1793 became the functionaries of Napoleon. In love with doled-out and peaceful pleasures, the Frenchman consents to have his hands half-tied, provided they are half-filled. His life, whether personal or political, is made up of compromises. The American knows nothing of them, or despises them. He proposes to have his hands both free and full, that is, to be free

¹ Woodrow Wilson, *The New Freedom*.

² *Ib.*

to fill them himself. He must have free play, the breakneck life of the adventurer. "With the American the instinct for freedom of movement," some one has said, "goes along with freedom of activity and freedom of thought."¹ The first commands the other two. It is characterized by impetuosity, violence; it is a rushing torrent, not a gently gliding rivulet. It may be recognized by a thousand indications: it manifests itself in the absence of ceremony, somewhat startling to the European police, of the Yankee who comes in noisily, keeping his hat on, puts his elbows on the table, or his feet on the chimneypiece; it appears in the exuberance of his physical life, his love of sports, his journeys, his long cruises, his headlong automobile drives; it explains his impetuous changes of plan—he builds a home for his declining years and sells it before the scaffolding is down, he adopts a profession and abandons it. He must go through existence at his own free will, feeling himself bound by no tie, chained to no task. The need of change is the first manifestation of his need of liberty.

But it is only an external manifestation, and athwart his independence we find strength. The American has that extraordinary power of

¹ *La France et les États-Unis*. Address of Walter V. Berry, p. 114.

expansion which is the property of youthful peoples, full of sap, and which Europe does not know, or knows no longer. With us thought directs activity, while with him activity springs out of thought; it is only one of the forms, and by no means the most essential form, that activity takes on when it realizes itself. We arrange, we regulate our lives; we map out for ourselves a plan of existence; our future commands our present. This is characteristic of reflective, cultivated, intellectual peoples. The American is not reflective, he is spontaneous like a force of nature. He is not cultivated, but rough hewn, a vivid, cheerful creature who only asks to develop in his own way, and not to be toned down. Properly speaking, he is not intellectual; he has not ideas but impulses and flights of fancy. His life, therefore, is not ready-made, constructed in advance by his thought, as is ours. It will be what it will be, or rather what it will make itself, by fits and starts, falls and uprisings, catastrophes and triumphs. But it will always be a progress, a realization, without even turning back upon itself in an effort at reflection, seeking to comprehend itself. "The American looks upon life from the point of view of activity."¹

But his force, exerting itself, encounters other

¹ Address of M. Boutroux, p. 7.

forces, of men, of things. "It is everywhere bound or limitation." Will the torrent deviate from its course, or turn back to its source? No, indeed! The American accepts destiny and looks it in the face. Far from submitting to it, he proposes to master it. "We must respect Fate as natural history, but there is more than natural history."¹ There is the appeal to all the resources of his being, physical and mental, to the hardening of his body, which grows tougher under fatigue and suffering, to that sagacity of mind which searches out useful reactions and opportune repartee. Unceasingly the impulse of choice and of action gushes up from the soul. Intelligence commands the inevitable,² and under the blows of his repeated experiences, his successes, and his checks the American becomes virile. The impetuous young animal becomes the man who masters himself. Strangely enough, the creature of impulse becomes not a reflective but a tenacious man.

Thus force is transformed into will. "There can be no driving force except through the conversion of the man into his will, making him the will and the will him."³ We no longer see

¹ Emerson, *The Conduct of Life : Fate.*

² *Ib.*

³ *Ib.*

mere energy; henceforth we have before us a character.

It first manifests itself by the faculty of decision. It is not enough to will, nor even to will well—one must will quickly. Life does not wait, and the hesitating are left in the rear. The important thing is to judge of a situation at a glance and decide upon one's action, to "plunge into a decision."¹ Those who err are worth more than those who lag behind, for the former can repair or modify their mistakes; the latter will never catch up. "In the course of business you must come to a decision; the best, if you can, but a decision of any sort is better than none."² One must be able to "decide at a moment's notice."³ One is amazed to see with what rapidity, with a word, a telephone message, a stroke of the pen, the most colossal business matters are proposed, accepted, regulated.

Determination once reached, execution must follow, and at the shortest notice. It is the era of difficulties. The weak blame destiny and give up. The American is no weakling and he persists. "Let him hold his purpose as with the tug of gravitation. No power, no persuasion, no bribe shall make him give up his

¹ *Ib.*

² *Ib.*

³ *Ib.*

point.”¹ By inflexible resolution man comes to master the forces of nature, to transform these demons into gods. New problems are posited every moment. To take but one example, we know those unexpected and apparently insoluble problems which American engineers encountered when constructing the Panama Canal. In another order of ideas, we know the efforts of President Wilson to win over his country to the idea of intervention, and, above all, to conscription. But the canal was dug, and ten millions of possible soldiers are inscribed to-day and, if necessary, will be enlisted and drilled to the last man. The United States find at home “that class of affirmative men” that “conceive and execute all great things.”²

And all is done by this ardent but self-contained nation with a self-possession, a “self-control” which commands respect. While leading an “exciting” life, it permits nothing to appear outside, is firm before a check, tranquil before success; it wavers—but only within.

And let no one imagine that this is the case with a few exceptional natures endowed with clearer perceptions and an uncommon force of will. Such as these no doubt generally go fur-

¹ *Ib.*

² *Ib.*

ther. But they simply carry to a higher degree the fundamental qualities of the race; they differ from the mass only in degree, not in nature. If America is great, and growing greater, it is the deed of all, not of a few. "A nation is as great, and only as great, as her rank and file."¹ It is "the common man," "the average man," who in the narrow sphere in which he toils, and which by his effort he more or less enlarges, obtains, or more correctly, laboriously compels, these results. "It is the great body of toilers that constitute the might of America."²

America is the land of *toilers*; this is its true physiognomy. The millionaire himself is the poor toiler of yesterday who in the rich toiler of to-day continues to toil. The toiler is he who has faith, not a facile and passive faith in a lucky chance, but an active faith in his own strength and will. He knows that he may not count upon chance unless he abets it. He knows that a man's fortunes are "the fruit of his character,"³ and that success is a function of merit and effort. "We do not admire the timid man of peace, we admire the man of victorious effort."⁴ Should it prove useless, effort must still be put forth. "It is hard to fail, but it is

¹ Woodrow Wilson, *The New Freedom*.

² *Ib.*

³ Emerson, *The Conduct of Life*.

⁴ Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life*.

worse never to have tried to succeed. In this life we succeed in nothing without effort.”¹ Woe to the men and the peoples *who have no history*, to those who have not truly lived, who have dragged themselves along “in the gray twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat.”² The American *has a history*; his life, made up of successive audacities, perpetual defiances of destiny, is a game in which the invariable stakes are difficulties. It is neither resignation nor expectation; it revolts against constraint, it goes ahead of facts, and sometimes even of possibilities. The word “impossible” is not American. America’s history is the product of her liberty.

From the moment when a man acts, not with that *deficient* freedom which consists in not being opposed or molested, but with a properly *efficient* freedom by which he proposes to realize all the powers of his being, a moral element enters into action. “When the Americans speak of freedom they speak only of freedom for self-development, for useful activity, for rising.”³ And such a freedom not only is reconciled with the idea of discipline, it implies and demands it.

¹ *Ib.*

² *Ib.*

³ De Rousiers, Preface to the French translation of *The Strenuous Life*, p. xiii.

It is the *liberty of well-doing*, or rather, the *liberty to duty*.

Thence arise all those restrictions that overturn our European and especially our French conception of liberty. We find it difficult to accept things that are contrary to our tastes and incommode our habits. The American has few tastes and no habits; the things that he cannot endure are things that put an obstacle in the way of his initiative. But these people, so jealous of their independence, yield without a murmur to all sorts of puritan restrictions, liquor laws, Sunday laws, etc., which are still in vigor in certain States of the Union. The Frenchman would rather die of drink than impinge upon the privileges of the wine-growers. On the other hand, the constant meddling of the administration in the thousand details of industrial and agricultural production would not be tolerated in the United States, for it would seem to paralyze action. The American will consent to the restriction of his enjoyments so long as his activities are unhindered; the Frenchman tolerates interference with his activities provided the doors of the café and the cinema are left open.

Again, American liberty is a "jealous liberty," permitting draconian prohibitions with regard

to others; strict protection closing the ports to products of foreign industry, pitiless measures against Chinese immigration, or that of "undesirables." Selfishness, all this, no doubt, but an intelligent and in its way moral selfishness. What the American proposes to protect is American energy, which would be weakened, American initiative, which would be checked, by an influx of cheap labor or of worthless or useless men of no value to the country. America refuses *liberty to injure*, tolerating only liberty to act and to produce. Liberty must have productiveness as a corollary. The unproductive, *a fortiori* the destructive, have no right to existence, and still less to admission.

That there is narrowness and a degree of injustice in this conception is certain. It may be too facile and too rigid. While it is hard upon the weak, it often risks appearing ill judged and tactless, of shutting out forces that are of another order and perhaps even on a higher level. But its intent is pure. American liberty, which, as has been shown, draws its inspiration from the gospel, and whose "deep roots . . . draw their nourishment from the general *substratum* of the American spirit,"¹ is for men of good-will, and will is good only when it is strong, daring,

¹ *Ib.*, *op. cit.*, p. xv.

creative. Furthermore, it is justified by its works; it has made a free America.

It is a joyful, light-hearted, and productive liberty, of which President Wilson speaks, deeming it still imperfectly realized, but extolling it in terms like these: Is not this the highest idea that you could form of liberty—that it is that which relieves men and women of all that weighs upon them, and prevents them from being and doing their best, which frees their energy and carries it to its utmost limit, which emancipates their aspirations to a limitless extent, and which fills their minds with the great joy which is born of the realization of hope?¹

What practical use will the American make of this liberty? And by what means will he set it to work?

¹ Woodrow Wilson, *The New Freedom*.

III

EDUCATION

Its virile character.—It admits of risk.—Respect for the child's *liberty*.—Moral *equality* of parents and children.—The American educational *system*.—Its practical character.—*Culture* sacrificed to utility.—American science.—Little theory, but results.

First of all, liberty penetrates education. The latter, in America, is inspired with a spirit diametrically opposed to that of France. With us the question is to make life pleasant to the child, with them to make it free, and therefore useful. The French boy, coddled, indulged, is brought up, so to speak, *sentimentally*, in an anxious, apprehensive atmosphere that would remove every pebble from his path. The result is a sprightly, dainty, often precocious child, but capricious, petted, wilful, and without will; his mind open to things of the intellect, but ill adapted to serve the purposes of a man of action. In the United States his training is virile, with apparent indifference to, but a truer respect for, his moral personality; he is, above all, taught to rely upon himself, in some sort to detach himself from his parents instead of clinging to them. American parents do not live for their child in the sense in which we in France under-

stand the term; he is not the exclusive object of their preoccupations; they live first of all for themselves. Not that they love him less; they love him otherwise, and in spite of appearances, with a perhaps less selfish love, seeking above all else to make of him a person, a self-governing being.

In the first place, American education, like American life, admits of risk. When the boy finds obstacles in his way, it is for him and none other to remove them. Accustomed from his earliest years to travel, to cross the ocean, he learns how to meet physical difficulties. Little creatures of six and eight years, playing freely on the deck of a transatlantic, lean over the nettings, risking their lives, unwatched by mother or nurse. Accidents are none the more numerous—quite the contrary. Obligated to be on their guard against danger, warned by precocious experience, the boy instinctively acquires useful reflexes, suppleness of body, sureness of eye, which almost invariably enable him to ward off danger at an age when the French child, relying upon the help of others, is helpless in the face of danger when by chance he is deprived of such help. An American boy of eleven will go to the bank to cash his mother's check for a thousand dollars, as among us he would go

on an errand to the grocer's or the dairy. And if you should express fear of intrusting him with so large a sum at his age, his parents would be amazed at your apprehensions.¹

More than this. At a very early age the child appears to be master of his conduct. He receives counsels, but not commands. Without being punished he is put on guard against the consequences of his acts. A lad of twelve, believing himself to be the victim of injustice on the part of the master, declares that he will never again set foot in the school. His father neither entreats nor threatens him, as doubtless he would do in France. "Just as you like; but have you well considered what you would lose in giving up study?" Whereupon the boy deliberates within himself, and finally decides to return to school. No line of conduct has been imposed upon him; the terms of the problem have simply been stated to him, leaving to him the business of solving it.

American education is governed by the two-fold principle of respect for personal liberty and that sentiment of equality which naturally follows in its train. The child is treated as a free man, and he treats himself as such. He is told—and he soon learns to say to himself,

¹ Cf. de Rousiers, *La Vie Américaine*, pp. 407 ff.

not "Act as you think best, do as you please," but "Act on your own responsibility, do as you will." The best way of substituting will for caprice is to instil into the child from his earliest years a sense of full responsibility. He knows from the first that his decisions depend upon himself alone, that they will neither be dictated nor suggested to him; that as a natural result he must endure all the consequences of his decisions; that no paternal or maternal hand will be extended to remove from his path the obstacles which he has himself heaped up before himself. He stands face to face with his acts as a business man before a venture which is proposed to him. "Will it pay? Will it result in loss?" It is a pragmatic conception of education, well adapted to develop at once prudence and firmness. After a few unhappy experiences the child will take the desired bent, and will run no risks without full knowledge.

Moreover, he is treated by his parents not as an inferior, but as an equal. "In America, the family, in the Roman and aristocratic significance of the word, does not exist."¹ The authority of the *paterfamilias* is unknown. The father is the child's counsellor and guide, not his master. The child feels himself to be protected

¹ De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, II, p. 223.

without being under tutelage. There are not two lines of conduct, one for "grown persons" and another for children. The American family is a society, or more correctly, an association of equals; each in his rank and on his level, according to his age and strength, plays his part as collaborator. The child receives the impression—at first faint, but soon pretty well defined—of participation in the common life. Thence he develops a very vivid sense of personal dignity. He is not asked to *obey*, but to understand and to act. He will therefore show more confidence, more frankness, than an adulated and yet subordinated child in a French family. In the latter we too often observe a spirit of dissimulation, or at least of furtiveness—something, let us admit, of the mentality of the slave, who finds secrecy to be a means of partly escaping from his master; he fears to be scolded far more than he expects to be guided; while the young American, on the other hand, feels a real desire to ask counsel of this experienced comrade, this knowing friend, whom he finds in his father. And family feeling, less demonstrative, less intimate, perhaps, in a certain sense, is not less strong. It is inspired by a mutual respect of which we, perhaps, know too little.

In fact, there are no children in America.

The child is already a man. And he acts like a man. Huret, in the course of his journey, visited a boys' club in San Francisco, whose president was fourteen years old, the members being from twelve to sixteen.¹ He was struck by their serious behavior, the absence of trifling, of *fooling*, so to speak. At all times the American boy looks upon life as a serious thing; he treats it as a business, never taking it lightly or as a joke. He is at once younger and less a child than a French boy. He is younger, with more spontaneity, freshness, artlessness, and also with more purity. He is certainly less precocious than we are; like the English boy, at eighteen he often seems to be fifteen, with the wondering candor which often brings a smile to the lips of his better-informed comrade overseas, whose intelligence is more developed, more sophisticated. But he is less a child, more ready to take hold of life with courage and decision. "He must know how to work and how to play vigorously. He must have a clear mind and a clean life,"² said Mr. Roosevelt, in 1900. In fact, he knows better how to play than our boys do; witness the matches between Harvard and Yale, as celebrated as those between Ox-

¹ Huret, *De San Francisco à Canada*.

² Quoted by Lannelongue, *Un tour du monde*, p. 324.

ford and Cambridge, and in which he puts forth a daring energy. But he also works better and at an earlier age. He can leave his country, make the tour of Europe and of the world at an age when, in France, he is still crouching under his mother's petticoats. He goes straight ahead, with that clear if somewhat short-sighted vision, that rectitude of manner and judgment by which he stoutly confronts life, when our boys, after long years of study, are still seeking their way.

He also brings to it courage. "A boy needs at once physical and moral courage," under pain of being "only a half-power."¹ He has both, and consequently is a full power. He has hardened his muscles and disciplined his nerves by the practice of "football," "baseball," and other rough games. He has disciplined his will by learning that he must depend upon himself and not upon the support of his family. The American boy and girl expect nothing from their parents. They would be ashamed to ask, she a dowry, he an establishment in business, to have life made for them instead of making it for themselves. If our children are often intelligences, theirs are always characters. At a bound, on leaving school, they leap into life.

¹ *Ib.*, p. 324.

"In America there is, strictly speaking, no adolescence. From his earliest years the man appears and begins to make his way for himself."¹

The American educational system is naturally adapted to the temperament of the pupil. It starts with this training in liberty, "self-government." On the whole it is simple, practical, the same for all, and of brief duration. It is designed to make men and not "scholars," and to make the most men in the shortest possible time. It goes straight to its object.

These characteristics, but little modified at the present day, impressed Tocqueville. "Even their acquirements partake in some degree of the same uniformity. I do not believe that there is a country in the world where, in proportion to the population, there are so few ignorant and at the same time so few learned individuals. Primary education is within the reach of everybody; superior instruction is scarcely to be obtained by any."² Things have changed in the sense that numerous and splendid universities have been founded. But the higher education there dispensed does not differ in spirit from primary education; it simply pro-

¹ *Ib.*, p. 324.

² De Tocqueville, *op. cit.*, I, 65.

longs and completes it. The purpose remains the same, to give useful notions.

The American concerns himself but little with culture, considering it a luxury good for a few *dilettanti*, but which does not "pay," and which, as such, appears somewhat suspicious to the positive Yankee mind. Knowledge for the sake of knowledge seems to him not worth while. He would almost reproach it for retarding progress by lingering over chimeras, instead of welcoming it and laying hold upon its realities. Even truth ought to be "instrumental"¹ and serve us as a mount² upon which to ride by way of experience in search of discoveries that may contribute to physical well-being and moral betterment. Education is only a means, not an end, it is an accessory or an auxiliary which has no value in itself. It is simply expected to provide man with a baggage of useful information, strictly sufficient to prevent his being held back in his progress. More than elsewhere universal education is necessary in a country where there are no ready-made careers, and every one needs a "kit of intellectual tools" which will enable him to adapt himself to the various exigencies with which he may find himself confronted. But he does not

¹ William James, *Pragmatism*.

² *Ib.*

propose to encumber himself with superfluous trifles, especially not with that literary and artistic cultivation which properly belongs to gilded idleness. He must leave school with a practical and supple intellect, and thorough acquaintance with a sufficient number of elementary notions. As time goes on he will acquire, according to need, the technical knowledge special to a given situation, either in the appropriate institute, or more often in the shop or the office.

Nearly all passing through the same primary school, subjected to the same American discipline, children find the few differences levelled which might still remain between them, and it is in school, above all, that they become "Americanized." "The great melting-pot of America, the place where we are all made Americans of, is the public school, where men of every race and every origin and of every station in life send their children, or ought to send their children, and where, being mixed together and *infused with the American spirit*, the youngsters are developed into American men and American women."¹

In this sense the model American pupil is the American *savant*. He is a sort of superior work-

¹ Woodrow Wilson, *The New Freedom*, p. 97.

man, an artisan of genius. There are few pure theorists in the United States; they have not produced a Descartes, a Leibnitz, a Newton, vast synthetic minds arriving at a general conception of the universe, a method that revolutionizes science. But they give birth to an Edison, that is to say, to an empirical creator. He is not a mathematician, he does not align equations, does not find the universe at the end of his calculations. But he observes, he ferrets out, he delves, he experiments, he mingles, he twists and untwists his threads; he is a brain occupying itself with visions rather than with ideas. Genius itself, in America, lacks spread of wings; its sight is short and immediate; it knows not how to wait, it must realize. Huret well perceived this characteristic. "What they seek," he says, speaking of American inventors and men of research, "is abstractions verified by palpable realities. They understand only with their eyes."¹

Which is to say that though the American may be an *idealist* he is almost never a *conceptualist*. "The American mind shuns general ideas; it never addresses itself to theoretic research."² "The American mind has very clear

¹ Huret, *De New-York à la Nouvelle-Orléans*.

² De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, II, pp. 20, 21, *passim*.

but very limited notions of things and ideas. It never generalizes, for generalization requires meditation, and we are considering a nation of men of action."¹ Not that he is without imagination, but his imagination is at once concrete and schematic; it clearly shows him things, and in things their elements, their more or less ingenious modes of combination, the mechanism that brings them together and makes them work; but though imagination may analyze, it never transcends vision. It analyzes, at need it amplifies, but it lacks wings. America can produce an Edgar Poe, but not a Victor Hugo. "Practical sense . . . dominates fancy."² In the field of science the American imagination invents new mechanisms, but it formulates no new system.

The American educational system feels the effect of this. It is complete but limited. It consists almost exclusively of concrete notions, of facts rather than ideas, or of ideas suggested by facts, and making use of them. As with science, teaching is a business, and to be a good business it must pay.

¹ Huret, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

² *Les États-Unis et la France*. Address of M. Boutroux, p. 9.

IV

THE MAN

A poor man who aspires to be rich.—His energy.—His faculty of adaptation to any task.—The “business man.”—The strenuous life.—The sense of *opportunity*.—Self-confidence.—Incomplete but powerful life of the American.—The mysticism of activity.

What sort of man comes forth from such a school? A man prepared to face, or rather, to defy life. To understand him one must take account both of his starting-point and of the object which he proposes to attain. He is a *poor man who aspires to become rich*.

A poor man, whatever his origin, and it behooves him not to forget it. De Rousiers admires “this ingenious mechanism which constrains the son of a millionaire to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow.”¹ Emerson, with his characteristic pungent vigor, strongly brings out this trait: *Our country is a country of poor men*; the human race has spread abroad upon this continent to do justice to itself; *all men are in shirt-sleeves*; they put on no airs like the poor rich of the cities, who desire to pass themselves off as rich, but they *take off their coats* and work hard when labor is sure to bring in returns.²

¹ De Rousiers, *La Vie Américaine*, p. 412.

² Emerson, *Essays*.

Again, this poor man is straightforward; he has not behind him a long past of glory, military, artistic, scientific, or literary, opening a perspective to his activity, or impelling it in various directions. He has no model outside of himself, and he finds few ideas within himself. He therefore naturally sets before himself the one object conceivable for a man whom nothing, either within or without, deflects from a certain course: the making of money. Wealth is the one idea of men who have no ideas. "Why do men desire to become rich? Solely from the absence of ideas. We are first without thought, and then we discover that we are without money."¹

Finally, he has the contagion of example. Everything around him invites him to hunt the dollar. "Here a living is so easily, so abundantly earned. Easily because it suffices to love work; abundantly because every effort is rewarded without parsimony."² He knows that there is room for all, and that every effort is certain of its result. He has seen not many individual successes, but "states in some sort improvised by chance."³ Often such states have been the work of one man, or of a handful of men. A railway is planned, a station built,

¹ *Ib.*² *Ib.*³ De Tocqueville, *De la Démocratie en Amérique*, I, 82.

and around it are grouped a few wooden shanties. At once electric cars are running in streets barely blocked out, but lighted with arc-lamps; a bank is built, and a church. That force of attraction that emanates from a superior will draws to itself and to the barely sketched project other wills, less powerful but not less ardent, that circle in its orbit. Thus were founded New Bedford, Lynn, and many another city. They were the work of one man, they would not have been if he had not been, they would have been elsewhere if he had so willed. "Each of these men, if they were transparent, would seem to you not so much men as walking cities, and wherever you put them they would build one."¹ Our young American says to himself: "I will be that man." And he does his best to be such a man.

He finds added stimulant in his personal activity, and in the education that he has received. In his activity because, for him, the important thing is to be busy; to work while travelling, while eating, one would almost say, while sleeping. He lives in express-trains, changes cars ten times a day, sleeps in a "Pullman" to save time, is always hanging over the telephone or the telegraph, no sooner finishes

¹ Emerson, *The Conduct of Life : Fate.*

one thing than he begins three others. He is like an Englishman who should know neither "home" nor "holiday." They are all like this, "a race saturated with electricity, hurrying along at top speed, and whose ideal appears to be the paroxysm."¹

Furthermore, his education, elementary, hasty, and overloaded, has prepared him for all sorts of works without especially fitting him for any one. He would easily have become an excellent specialist on any, for he has an aptness for detail and precision, but he is generally indifferent to specialization, and ready to accept any occupation. "His capacity is more general, the sphere of his intelligence is larger,"² but he is not more interested in any one system of operations than in any other; "he is no more bound to the old method than to the new; *he has formed no habits.*"³ Now a profession is a habit, and the most inveterate of all habits.

The American has no profession. He passes with a haste disconcerting to us from one business to another, wholly different. "Last year I was an engineer; this year I shall be a journalist."⁴ The following year he will, perhaps, be a gold-seeker, a farmer, or a banker. Were

¹ Huret, *De New-York à la Nouvelle-Orléans*, p. 322.

² De Tocqueville, *op. cit.*, II, 415.

³ *Ib.*, II, 415, 416.

⁴ De Rousiers, *La Vie Américaine*, p. 621.

he to do the same thing for twenty years, the twenty-first he could with perfect ease shift his gun to the other shoulder, and engage in an entirely new enterprise.

This inconstancy is, however, only apparent, and unity of direction is found through diversity of occupations. At bottom, all Americans practise the same profession, that of the "business man," the promoter of affairs; and this profession includes all the others. The newspaper-boy on the train is a business man. Edison inventing a way to ward off submarine torpedoes is a business man. Even President Wilson, at the same time head of the army, diplomatist, and superintendent of agriculture, is a business man.

The business man may be recognized by two characteristics: the limited character of each of his undertakings, and the facility with which he adapts himself to new conditions. These two characteristics are found in all Americans.

1. They engage in business. Each undertaking, by itself considered, is a special operation, sufficient in itself; it is held to produce the maximum of results in the minimum of time. Once organized it gives no more concern, and the head passes on to another. And

so on indefinitely. There is, therefore, not so much a continuity of effort as a succession of multiplied efforts which need not so much to be co-ordinated as to be continually renewed. The life of the "business man" does not demand unity, at least externally; it can occupy itself, and it is interested in occupying itself, along as many different lines as his activity can devise, construct, and carry on. It embraces a series of almost instantaneous presents or very near futures; it is an addition, a totalization, a juxtaposition of parts. Why should he have a "calling," that is to say, narrow the sphere of his activity and limit its profits?

2. As a result, the novelty of an enterprise is to the business man not an obstacle but an attraction. He does not remind himself that he knows nothing about it, but rather tells himself that he is capable of adapting himself to it. Not being cramped by routine, he sees in a new line of undertaking only new and larger possibilities of success, and all the more that he does not, like the European, live in a closed circle in which to-day is as yesterday, and to-morrow, to all appearance, will be but the copy of to-day. "The American lives in a world of progress; everything around him is ceaselessly changing, and each movement ap-

pears to be a progress. The idea of the new is in his mind intimately allied to the idea of the better.”¹ He therefore consents willingly to change the direction of his effort if he sees reason to believe that he will find more favorable opportunities in another career. To be keen on the scent of opportunity and to seize it when it presents itself—all America is in this thought. “America is opportunity,” said Emerson, and opportunity presents itself everywhere in a new country, “opportunity of time, of conjecture, of place.”² The thing is to know how to profit by it, and in this the young American is not found wanting.

He is guided by a twofold faith: he has faith in success, and above all he has faith in himself. He has faith in success—sometimes, indeed, too blind a faith. “The Americans pursue facts . . . they pursue success, not talent.”³ This is because success is the sign of talent, and for them a sign that never deceives. If they care for titles, for decorations, for a conspicuous name, and, above all, for money, which in the country of the dollar consecrates titles, decorations, and names, it is because in money they see the proof, and the only proof which counts to

¹ De Tocqueville, *op. cit.*, II, p. 416.

² *Les États-Unis et la France*. Address of Walter V. Berry, p. 123.

³ Emerson, *Essays*.

them, the material, visible, tangible proof of inward worth. Money is only a criterium, but it is an infallible and indispensable criterium. An unsuccessful effort is a blameworthy effort; an unsuccessful man is an incompetent man. Genius may not dwell in a garret; it must choose a palace for its home.

Therefore, one *ought* to succeed; but the American is convinced that he *can* succeed, and this conviction, which in itself is a force, is generally well founded. In this country where success is on the whole easy, one must be very incapable or very unskilful not to be able to overcome misfortune. This state of things cannot but encourage in the inhabitant of the United States that self which is the privilege of royal natures,¹ and let us add the best quality of the man of action. Therefore he does not quail before the first check nor the tenth. Either the enterprise could not have been profitable, or it was not adapted to his faculties. He must find something else, and he seeks until he does find. He will discover his true aptitude on the day when he succeeds. One knows oneself only by testing. He will test himself until he knows himself.

Such is our man, and he is a man. Reverse

¹ Emerson, *Essays*.

does not depress him; success excites without dazzling him, and urges him on to new successes. Why should he pause? Victor or vanquished, he will hardly find resources in himself; he is not intellectually rich enough to suffice unto himself. He thinks only of what is necessary to light his way and wring results from his acts. Therefore he needs to spread himself abroad, to *exteriorize* himself unceasingly. "In the ardent life of New York," says M. Lannelongue, "there is room only for business and pleasure."¹ And pleasure consists chiefly in the expenditure of physical energy, or in the life of society. It has no place for solitary meditation, none for the pure enjoyment of art, for philosophical reflection. It is a manifestly incomplete existence.

But it is not a petty existence. For if the American is not the complete man, he is at least completely what he can be. He gives only what he has, but he gives without reckoning. He is in a perpetual state of tension and of *hypertension*. And in this sense this specimen of incomplete humanity has something of the "superman." He is not a hothouse plant, but the luxuriant plant of a tropical vegetation, exuberant in sap, profusely realizing itself in flowers and fruits. His is a rich nature which

¹ *Un Tour du Monde*, p. 336.

produces in feverish haste. "Everything combines to keep the soul in a sort of feverish agitation, which admirably disposes it to all sorts of efforts, and *maintains it, so to speak, above the common level of humanity.* To the American all life goes on like a game, a period of revolution, a day of battle."¹ A homespun life if ever there was one, under all its apparent luxury and well-being. "The life of toil and effort, of labor and strife."² This it is which gives to the men in the street "those chins and jaws by which," says Huret, "I should recognize the American type at the ends of the earth."³ This it is which gives to an American crowd, so different from the impressionable, mobile, and excitable French crowd, its character of concentrated energy. "It is cold, it is indifferent, it has a conscience, an aim; each individual here seems to be endowed with a clear-cut personality and a determined will."⁴ This life, rather rich than unsophisticated, rather strong than tender, rather active than intellectual, and not in the least sentimental, goes straight to the new, to creating. As far removed from mysticism as possible the American, nevertheless, has

¹ De Tocqueville, *op cit.*, I, p. 548.

² Roosevelt, quoted in *Les États-Unis et la France*, p. 7. Cf. *The Strenuous Life*, p. 1.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 317.

⁴ Lannelongue, *op. cit.*, p. 330.

enthusiasm, faith, and almost the mysticism of action. He feels himself to have been born for great things, "the greatest things in the world"—him, the citizen of "the greatest nation in the world"; who knows? perhaps he was born to make or to remake the world itself. "Any American, taken at random, is likely to be a man ardent in desire, enterprising, adventurous, above all an *innovator*." ¹ How colorless in his elegance, how anæmic in his fragile grace, appears beside this younger brother the elder brother of Europe, of a delightful but somewhat outworn type! One can understand how we produce an effect as of out-of-date vapidness to this still somewhat rough-hewn creature, who yet resolutely takes his place at the head, and proposes to precede and guide us in the path of progress.

¹ De Tocqueville, *op. cit.*, I, p. 548.

V

THE WOMAN

Equality of sexes.—Co-education.—Physical life and “culture.”
—Marriage.—Independence of the married woman.—Frequency of divorce.—Every woman a feminist.

A like sense of independence and strength is found in the American woman, not attenuated but perhaps still more strongly marked.

In fact, like the man, she has to struggle and attain, while she has one more adversary to fight, man himself. It behooved her to master this rough, hard creature, and she has done it. The weaker sex, in this land of individual domination, dominates the stronger.

To reach this point she must needs become, first the equal of man, and then his superior. She is his equal so far as will goes, she proposes also to direct her own life, and she is able to do it, either at his side, if she marries him, or alone, if she remains single. It appears that she is tending to become his superior, not indeed in intelligence, but in intellectuality and refinement. She has more leisure, especially if she is married, and she by no means devotes it all to her dressmaker and milliner. If culture finds its way into the United States it will be in great part owing to woman.

Side by side with a femininity that is sometimes exquisite there is in her something masculine, or, more correctly, virile. She is like a man in her walk and her freedom of manner. She has the same independence of judgment, and perhaps, in the case of the young girl, she has less candor than the boy.

She is treated like a man; is recognized as having the same rights, while preserving certain privileges of her sex. But no man dreams of refusing her a situation or a position because he gives her flowers. Almost all careers are open to her, often including public functions. In the United States there is no question of sex.

This equality is manifest from infancy. "Boy" and "girl" receive the same education, physical and intellectual, and often in the same school. Co-education appears, to this healthy people of calm senses, to be a perfectly natural thing, and raises none of the problems which we in France find such difficulty in solving. The little American girl has nothing of the doll about her. Like her brother she is an active creature, fond of sport, and before all "a good fellow"; like him she plunges into life in perfect freedom; like him she develops her body according to its nature and to her own;

she practises gymnastics, rides horseback, loves the open air, rides the bicycle and even the motor-cycle; if she is rich she has her own automobile and runs it. Nor does she forget to prepare herself for her duties as a wife and housekeeper. She takes cooking-lessons; it is even not an unusual thing to find her at a bench in a workshop—and all, according to the American method, in the way of heaping up knowledge rather than co-ordinating it. To sum up, there is nothing distinctive in the education she receives.

The result is a charming creature, original—at least to us—sweet, thoughtless, often superficial and always vital, like her brother. She resembles him much more than a French sister resembles her brother, and this is easy to understand, since she has always associated with boys instead of being kept apart from them. There is in her not the slightest trace of affectation or artificiality. She is as pleasing as the Frenchwoman without having been, like her, brought up to please. She is what she is without pretension. Huret noted in her “an absence of timidity without a shadow of effrontery.”¹

She is not innocent in the sense of being ig-

¹ *De New-York à la Nouvelle-Orléans*, p. 60.

norant. "She is remarkable rather for purity of morals than for chastity of mind."¹ Accustomed from early life to look the world in the face, aware of all realities, love is for her a simple, healthy thing, of which she speaks without false shame. If she flirts it is partly for fun, as a game, without a thought of evil. Her liberty is more of a safeguard to her than a danger. She sees and receives young men, goes about with them like a comrade. If she leaves home to complete her education in college, her fiancé will visit her in her room like any other friend, and no one finds anything to complain of. For that matter, she is completely left to herself, travels alone from one end of America to the other, crosses the ocean alone, and lives alone in Europe. Her mother is her grown-up friend, as the father is the grown-up friend of his son; nothing more.

She often—more often than the young man, and with reason—desires to be instructed and to cultivate her mind. She studies languages, ancient and foreign literature, somewhat at haphazard, not without profit if not always with good taste. At Boston and elsewhere may be found young girls who are excellent Latin and even Greek scholars. They study art,

¹ De Tocqueville, *op. cit.*, II, p. 242.

especially painting, in which they often display real talent.

In general the American girl wishes to marry, but she does not make marriage the aim of her existence, and all the less that she knows that she will be sought for her own sake, and not "for a dowry which she has not and cannot have."¹ In fact, the richest girls are not always the most sought after; there are daughters of multimillionaires who are not married, and it is not always because they did not wish to be.

The American girl, indeed, looks upon marriage after her own manner. She proposes to choose her own husband, and her parents have no idea of imposing one upon her. In the United States it is not families who marry, but individuals. Therefore nearly all marriages are marriages of inclination. But they are seldom marriages of passion. The American girl knows little of "great love." Of all our romantic poets Musset is the one for whom she cares least. But she generally has a high consciousness of duty, and will be a faithful if not a tender wife. Everything considered, the average American couple is morally superior to the average European.

The American woman has also, perhaps

¹ Lannelongue, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

above all, a sense of her rights. Just as while she remains single she is able to create a place in society for herself, just so much, once married, she expects her husband to make one for her. No doubt she will accept reverses and trials with courage, but in principle it is the husband's part to make money and the wife's to spend it.

She is too independent to be a woman of the fireside. The conception of the fireside, the "home," hardly squares with American manners. It is something not easy to constitute in this life of perpetual changes and journeyings, with the difficulty of procuring servants, or, having them, of being well served. In fact, the need of a home is less keenly felt in the United States than in Europe. The American has little sense of privacy. The sexes desire to associate with one another rather than to find completion in one another. The individual, of whatever sex, is sufficient to himself. Among us the isolated person is lost, diminished.

This sense of mutual independence explains how an American husband and wife can take their meals at a hotel, or live in a "boarding-house," sometimes even when they have children. It is this which makes intelligible those separations of several months, sometimes of one

or two years, which would hardly be tolerated in Europe, and not at all in France. The wife lives in Paris or London, Rome or Cairo, while the husband, reduced to the duty of banker, chiefly reveals his conjugal existence by the checks that he sends her or the credit which he opens for her in New York or Chicago. They meet as they had parted, with the "handshake" of two comrades rather than the kiss of husband and wife.

A more unhappy result of this independence is the frequency of divorce. It is to a great extent due to a great fearlessness of thought and sentiment allied to a no less great loyalty. For infidelity is, on the whole, pretty rare, and in general the real cause of divorce is incompatibility of temper, and a hardly veiled mutual consent, a desire to live together no longer.

To the American, and still less to the American woman, marriage is not an eternal engagement. They do not bind themselves for life, subordinating themselves one to the other. They come together in some sort conditionally, if not provisionally, reserving their liberty. From the bottom of their hearts they sincerely desire that their association may endure; but not that it shall endure at all cost. This is

because the American family, as we have already shown, is not superior to the individual; it is not the family but the individual that constitutes the social unit. The family is simply a natural and legal group of self-governing beings; it exists for them, and not they for it.

A dangerous conception, perhaps, in certain respects, but fundamentally American and individualistic. The individual must exist, in a family if he can, outside of it and by destroying it if he must. The abuse of divorce is only the price paid for the independence of the contracting parties.

Thus, at no moment of her life does the woman vacate her liberty. She does not pass from parental tutelage to the tutelage of a husband. She is not the "eternal minor" of the Code Napoleon, who is but now beginning to emancipate herself. Before, during, and after marriage, daughter, wife, and widow or divorced woman, she has the same rights, if not the same duties; she never belongs to any one but herself.

The American knows nothing of "the law of man," often so hard upon the woman of Europe; he knows only "the law of the human being," which is quite another thing. On our continent, when one reflects upon it, the condition of

woman, at times very agreeable, often very painful, is always somewhat contemptible. Man never treats her as an equal. Either he exploits her or he adulates her; but, whether beast of burden or little pet, she is not a self-governing creature. The American, less refined but more loyal, sees in her a being like unto himself. He jostles her in the street, speaks to her without lifting his hat, does not give her his seat in the street-car, in short, he treats her like a man, but he recognizes in her without evasion all a man's rights. Associate or adversary, she is always a comrade.

And the American woman has a conscience. Often superficial, as frivolous as a Frenchwoman, and more so, she is always more personal, less "a relative of man." She has in her something of Ibsen's *Nora*. Mrs. Mackay, the wife of the billionaire, writes a drama of free love, of which Huret has translated long extracts.¹ In artless but guileless symbolism she rejects all the servitudes of conjugal life. This is not, as might have been the case in France, the caprice of a rich and idle woman of the world. It is a very sincere manifestation (whatever may be its artistic or philosophic character) of a profound instinct of independence, and even of revolt

¹ Huret, *De New-York à la Nouvelle-Orléans*, pp. 216 ff.

against possible restraints. When, after her final liberation the heroine exclaims, "Henceforth I march along the highway of life, hearing above me the rustling of the strong wings of Truth in the winds of eternal Liberty," she is speaking like an American woman. In that country, from the richest to the poorest, every woman is a feminist.

There is, therefore, hardly a special psychology of the American woman. In Europe we seek to emphasize that which distinguishes her from man. In the United States the types tend to draw so near together as to obliterate all differences. If she wills—and at times she does will—the woman can do great things. It was the women who, in the temperance campaign, secured the triumph of their ideas in certain States of the Union. It would seem that in the present war they propose to play a part of first importance. They have done much to save the population of Belgium; many of them, regardless of the submarine danger, have crossed and continue still to cross the Atlantic to act as nurses on the French front.

Notwithstanding which, it may be that woman does not always find in her physically weaker frame the same power of resistance as man. But obstacles, if they exist, are within

her, and not exterior to her. She may be more easily overcome, or she may gain the victory at greater cost, but she is admitted to the conflict on the same ground and with like arms. Man does not make use of his superiority to bar the way before her. He plays his game loyally: "fair play." She has the same facilities for development as he, and if she finds in herself the same resources there is nothing to hinder her from using them precisely as he does.

VI

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The danger of anarchy.—Its remedies: *Personality* and *Morality*.
 —1. *Personality*: the power of the individual; elimination of the weak; America the country of victors.—2. *Morality*: Puritanism and Protestant discipline; personal religion; the sentiment of justice; alliance of duty and interest; idealization of self-interest; its natural prolongation into altruism.
 —The individual ideal.—The new human type.—Emerson's "reforming man."

The ideal of the American is liberty, conceived, first of all, as the free expenditure of untiring activity. Each proposes to "live his life" in its fullest and somewhat Nietzschean sense. But is there not danger here? Can an organized and coherent nation ever emerge from this tumult of individuals thus launched into the con-

flict, elbowing their way to pass the others, and not hesitating to trample upon the bodies of those who fall upon the road? And how shall anarchy be prevented in such a competition of unbridled energies?

The remedy lies beside the evil, or rather it resides in the evil itself; in the formidable explosive force of this exceptional personality. The existence of America as a nation is a stake won, a paradox realized. America has not avoided, not even overleaped, but overturned the obstacle by a headlong, impassioned movement which carries all along with it, thanks to an inward "stimulus," a spontaneous impulse emanating from the individual himself; he finds within himself the physical, intellectual, and moral resources which enable him to follow his own course and hew his way with no hindrance from his neighbor, and also without himself checking or delaying his neighbor in the race. "It is by the energy of individuals that American society was constituted and is maintained."¹

That which first strikes one in the United States is the absence of organization, that is, of concerted and collective effort. "There is no order in America; this is everywhere visible. Things go on, no one knows how, under the

¹ De Rousiers, *La Vie Américaine*, p. 682.

impulse of a wide-spread and continuous energy; but of regular order, of permanent and consecutive method, not a trace."¹ The waste of effort is manifest. It wells up from all directions, at all times, like so many creations *ex nihilo*, absolute beginnings. America is the land of spontaneous generation. No preconcerted plan, no general view of the whole; isolated manifestations, sporadic and disconcerting. It is the original chaos.

But from this chaos emerges a world, and it orders itself as naturally as it was born. One is reminded of the atoms of Epicurus, of that whirlwind in which all elements meet and mingle in ephemeral combinations, ceaselessly making and unmaking themselves, gradually uniting in composites increasingly stable. It is the property of life, it would seem, thus to manifest itself freely in a thousand unforeseen, unexpected forms; it asserts itself by the inner power of the germ which follows the law of its development, and which, though it renews its substance by unceasing borrowings from its surroundings, draws it most of all from itself. Such is the American, living in the first place by himself and upon himself, and finally, through many collisions and much opposition organizing

¹ Huret, *De New-York à la Nouvelle-Orléans*, p. 56.

himself for better, for worse, with those of his kind.

Had he been weak he would have succumbed, or rather, the weak do succumb, as the feeble twig is thrown off by the vigorous plant. America is the product of a rigorous twofold selection. At his origin, first; only the most hardy, the most enterprising individuals ventured the risk of emigrating, and among these only the wisest and most energetic succeeded in taking root and making a permanent place for themselves; and next, a continuous selection, for around the nucleus which these formed have gathered, and continue to gather, in successive waves and tides, the unemployed forces of Europe, of whom America unceasingly eliminates and grinds to pieces the "undesirable." This nation of rich men springs from a race of poor people, with robust nerves, muscles of steel, wills of iron, of whom effort is the law, and work the condition of existence. "Thus America has, as it were, skimmed the cream of the peoples of the Old World; this is why the human specimen is superior here to what it is in other countries." ¹

America is, then, a nation of victors. With no convergence of effort, all have come to form one mass, and that a harmonious mass. It is a

¹ P. Leroy-Beaulieu, *Les États-Unis au XIX^e siècle*. Preface, p. ix.

mistake to think that two, or many, strong personalities cannot exist at the same time. The contrary is true. The strong personality absorbs or destroys the weak one; what could he do with the useless, the social refuse? They encumber the streets and must be swept away. But when he meets his equal he most probably organizes a joint effort. Combining and coordinating themselves, both are the more efficient; competition leads either to collaboration or to the coexistence of parallel and solidary interests. There is room only for those who count, but there is room for all who count. America is a nation of equals—equal in strength and equal in victory.

Still, energy alone would not have sufficed to make her what she is. If she had been founded by adventurers and gold-seekers she would have been the equivalent of Mexico, or rather of one of the South American republics. "She is the work of men who, having made good their domination over the material elements of life, have gone on to attain domination of its moral elements, without which an organized society cannot exist."¹ The United States are, above all, the work of the Puritans.

¹ De Rousiers. Preface to the translation of Roosevelt's *American Ideals*, p. xi.

Thanks to them, America seems to be the realization of a great hope, that of the regeneration of the human race. The early colonists of New England, quitting their native land, fled from a land of perdition to seek in a new country a "land of liberty." Urged by an idea rather than by necessity, they were "pilgrims," seeking new shores that there they might maintain their faith without suffering persecution. They brought with them rigid doctrines, pure morals, inflexible discipline—so many bridles upon the unrestrained appetites too natural to a conquering people. They have impressed a strong, perhaps indelible, moral stamp upon the positive, trafficking beings which the greater number of Americans seem to be. Their influence, the first in date, was also the most profound; mingling with all succeeding influences it has moulded this composite individual: the man of duty who is at the same time the man of acquisitions.

But the discipline thus required could have been accepted only because it was marvellously adapted to his temperament. Had it been the Catholic discipline, imposing a strict, passive obedience, the *Credo quia absurdum*, it would have taken no hold upon the fiercely independent nature of the immigrant. On the contrary,

the Protestant discipline, founded on free investigation by the individual conscience, demanding a personal, well-considered, voluntary submission to a freely accepted obligation, favored, respected, magnified his personal independence. It was, on the whole, nothing else than the principle of "self-government" applied to religious matters. By its triumph the Puritans endowed America with a conscience; owing to them she has become a conscience-directed force.

This conscience is as much moral as religious, if not more so. All Americans are not Protestants; far from it; but most of them, though perhaps unconsciously, are more or less Puritans. They generally draw their inspiration from the Bible. But the Bible, "the Book," is only a guide, an adviser; it dictates no ready-made conclusions; it suggests a line of conduct which is followed only after, having been fully considered, it is adopted. Religion in America has not the narrowly confessional character of European Catholicism; it is an individualistic religion, a religion of liberty. Nine Americans out of ten will tell you "I belong to no Church." Religious sects swarm over the territory of the Union, each interpreting the Bible in their own way, because it is the particular property of

none of them. Religious tolerance proceeds from the same principle as tolerance in matters political, social, industrial, or commercial. Each may shape his life as he deems good: his material life by his labor, his moral life by his personal interpretation of the Scriptures.

This sincere faith is not a mere consent of the mind, it is an active, practical faith. The American does not ask the church to be his refuge, his door of salvation, his great consolation in affliction. He expects it to play a useful part, and God himself, as William James says, must be of use, must render services to man. "If the hypothesis God works satisfactorily . . . it is true."¹ If, upon reflection, he decides for spiritualism against materialism, it is because the hypothesis matter is sterile, idle, does not pay, whereas the hypothesis spirit has over it "a practical superiority."² In an essentially mechanical world, where only the actual exists, with no horizon and no future prospect, man would speedily deem his activities useless, and do what he found to do without pleasure. Whereas God, securing to us the existence of "an ideal order that shall be permanently preserved,"³ gives us in some sort a heart to work, makes our task

¹ W. James, *Pragmatism*.

² *Ib.*

³ *Ib.*

easy and glad by the prospect of success, it being perfectly understood that this success is still our own work, that God does not substitute himself for us, that he is present simply to stimulate us and give tone to our effort. Here, more than anywhere else, is the proverb true: "Help yourself and Heaven will help you."

Thus it is not a question of adoration, but of active collaboration with a Creator who, being an American, cannot have taken much rest since the seventh day of creation. The American feels that his God is working beside him, and he works with him. His religion becomes a part of his life, modifies and moulds it. Whether he be Salvationist, Mormon, or whatever other sect, his faith penetrates and forms his tastes, his habits, the cut of his clothes, the ordering of his meals. It organizes the family, determines the ceremonial of marriage, the relations between employer and employed. Heaven comes down to earth, the American gives form, strength, and vigor to whatever he believes.

Ministers of religion are naturally cut out of the same cloth as their people. According to their preaching the advantages of religion are not purely of a spiritual order. They dwell upon its benefit and profit in this world, upon

the advantages that liberty and the public order draw from it. In their minds the joys of heaven are upon a par with well-being here below, and the same effort procures them both. Let us be religious that we may be moral, and let us be moral that we may be happy.

This morality is none the less rigid, that in the United States happiness is not to be won without pains. Puritanism prescribed narrow regulations of which certain present-day prohibitions are as a feeble echo. It forbade traveling, cooking, cutting hair and shaving on Sunday. "The husband may not kiss his wife nor the mother her child on Sundays and holidays."¹ Practices have been mitigated, but the interdiction of whiskey and of providing meals on Sunday beyond a certain hour still bears the mark of its origin.

In any case, the essential element remains, that is to say, the spirit which inspired them. The moral sentiment which guides the American in all his undertakings is the sense of personal dignity, "self-respect." For if he desires to be respected by others, he imperiously feels the necessity of not being lowered in his own eyes. Hence arises, in this nation of business men, a

¹ M. Rodrigues has here fallen victim to an ancient and long-ago exploded joke. Note by the Translator.

solicitude for *purity*, a rectitude of thought and act, surprising to others. The president of Harvard, Mr. Roosevelt, and many educators, preach to students the chastity of young men before marriage. Such a crusade in Europe, and notably in France, would be likely to provoke a laugh or at least excite a smile in the audience. Over there, those who thus teach are listened to and followed by the great majority of their hearers—seventy per cent, if we are to believe the testimonies gathered by Huret.¹

If there are exceptions, they keep their own counsel. A man does not boast of his “good fortunes,” he blushes for them as for a weakness. To be seen in public with a woman of doubtful character constitutes a blemish which would close the doors of a university against one. As for respect for young girls, we have already seen that it is absolute. Is not this a “living ideal” far superior to the so-called idealistic romanticism under which the young men of Europe conceal many faults and much corruption?

For the same reasons of moral cleanliness the American keeps his engagements. He is severe, or rather “exact,” in business. This is the very word by which one of them characterized the

¹ Huret, *De New-York à la Nouvelle-Orléans*, p. 145.

superwealthy Rockefeller.¹ But he is loyal. What is due is due. Nothing more, we may be sure, for with him the spirit of a contract and its letter are one. From this point of view the working man of the United States is the model of working men, the only one, perhaps, who gives to the word *work* its full but strict sense. If he agrees for eight hours he gives eight hours, not a minute more, not a minute less. But they are eight hours of concentrated, tenacious, uniform work, not a tug at the collar, no feverish haste, but neither is there lounging, bungling, slighting, spoiling of tools. One knows that he is to be counted upon, and what may be expected of him—no surprises, either good or bad. On his part, the employer feels bound in honor to keep his agreement. He is not in the habit of chaffering as to pay, and if he reckons upon a large profit, he has no notion of realizing it at the expense of his employees. As a general rule, the American revolts at the idea of exploiting the labor of another. Every task should receive its due wage. No unpaid labor, nor any overpaid or underpaid work.

The basis of American morals is the practical synthesis of strict *justice* and properly under-

¹ Huret, *De San Francisco au Canada*.

stood *interest*. The American has a keen sense of both these sentiments, and finds them in perfect agreement: justice is the interest of others which I recognize to be as legitimate as my own; interest is justice to me, my legitimate aspiration after a better condition of being. The United States have reduced utilitarianism to practice. It should be recognized to their glory that in the industrial as in the political domain—as we shall shortly see—their most immediate and most evident interest coincides with the highest ends of the human conscience. It was already thus in Tocqueville's time. "The greater number of them," he said of the Americans, "believe that an intelligent apprehension of his own interest is sufficient to induce a man to be just and honest."¹ "In the United States they almost never say that virtue is beautiful. They show that it is useful, and they prove it daily."² The American is an intelligent egoist.

In fact, the idea of justice is, in many respects, a selfish idea, but this is a comprehensive selfishness. It asserts the *right*, and what is the right—that recognition of the human person and his real value—but the most legitimate selfishness? I cease to be a means; I propose

¹ De Tocqueville, *op. cit.*, II, p. 362.

² *Ib.*, III, p. 199.

to be an end; I am *I*. And by this act I claim for my *I* all that I recognize to be due, for the same reasons, to the *I* of others. *Suum cuique, neminem laede*, so many formulas which at once recognize and circumscribe the sphere of action of each individuality. The American does not measure too stingily this *suum*, but neither does he exaggerate it. It must correspond with the worth of effort put forth, and especially of the result attained. It therefore constitutes a guarantee, a security for the worker, and in the end it insures a better return for his work.

If this conception is narrow, it is intentionally so. It leaves no place for pity and charity. It is not sentimental. The American hardly understands sentiment, and is suspicious of it; he sees in it a sign rather of weakness than of kindness, leading to partiality and injustice, shocking the respect for liberty and equality which, in his country, takes precedence of all other qualities. Not that the American cannot be generous; far from it; he is splendidly, royally generous. Is it necessary to remind our readers that it is mainly due to him that Belgium has been fed? But granting this, even in the spontaneity of his act he follows his reason rather than his heart. His generosity does not spring from an impulse of sensibility,

but from a revolt of conscience. He is more properly repairing outraged right than performing a gracious act. A contract had been violated by one of the contracting parties. He does not deem himself merely a third party; his solicitude for neutrality compels him in some sort to do his part, and a large part, in paying what he looks upon as the debt of prosperous humanity to humanity outrageously despoiled.

Even in this case, even in this broad conception, he is true to his principle: morality gains by resting upon a contract. It presupposes freedom and equality in the case of the contracting parties. It has, therefore, no call to be charitable, to make gifts; its duty is to be just, to reimburse, to make retribution.

Self-interest is therefore justified. There is nothing mean or petty in it. Even where it appears the most cold-blooded it is often the most fruitful in good. Emerson often praises it, as in "some strong transgressor like Jefferson, or Jackson, who first conquers his own government, and then uses the same genius to conquer the foreigner."¹ And if "this force is not clothed in satin,"² if, especially in business, "it usually carries a trace of ferocity,"³ it is none

¹ Emerson, *The Conduct of Life: Power*.

² *Ib.*

³ *Ib.*

the less good in itself, and leaves behind it fewer ruins than harvests. It multiplies roads, railways, canals, schools. Civilization in general, and most particularly American civilization, is the product of self-interest.

The fact is that even in spite of itself this form of self-interest is more than generous, it is a generator; it is the self-interest of the open hand and not of the closed fist. Competition in itself implies first the collaboration and then the development of effort. In this extreme tension of energies, he who acts for himself acts for all, and incites those around him to activity. He sets in motion enormous forces, organizes, multiplies them, increases their power tenfold and their proceeds a hundredfold. He, therefore, must needs solicit help; he stings into activity forces which but for him would have remained inert. He obliges his neighbors to follow or to overtake him. Carried along by an impetuous impulse, he uplifts himself only by uplifting others. "There is always room for a man of force, and he makes room for many." ¹

By these means American self-interest naturally, inevitably, develops into altruism. The progress of one entails the progress of all. There is, as it were, a simultaneous movement of

all the strata of society to a higher level. This is, indeed, the property of democracy. Democracy is not a miracle, the immediate realization of universal well-being. It consists in the more and more rapid arrival of the greatest number, or at least of an ever-increasing number, at a state of welfare and security until then reserved for a caste of privileged persons, who jealously guarded them for themselves and transmitted them to their children only. Here, on the contrary, the upspringing of all individual wills finally results not in a levelling from below, but in an expansion of the collective existence which is almost universally elevated. Some gain more, others less, but in the end all gain. In this game, the game of free activities, there are, so to speak, no losers.

On the whole, the spectacle which America presents is singularly cheering. Far more than Europe she is without a poverty-stricken proletariat. This land of big capitalists is also the land of high wages, in inverse ratio to Germany, and often even to France. In the very struggle of classes there is here a strict solidarity, and on many points an identity of interests between capital and labor. Furthermore, if competition is fierce it is more easily turned into collaboration. Mr. Rockefeller

made it a rule, when forming trusts, always to offer shares to those with whom he was treating.¹ It is a constant rule, indeed. The trusts have always sought to absorb rather than destroy, and have shown themselves pitiless only to recalcitrants. If they have finally proved to be endangering American freedom, at least in their beginning they contributed to development. They have everywhere sought and they still seek for auxiliaries, and wherever these give appreciable service they pay largely, without haggling. The spirit of justice and respect for the personality of others are the natural fruits of creative and successful self-interest.

Emerson has brought into the light this *idealism* which is born of the very excess of *realism*. "Though in no respect idealistic, the coal-mines of Pennsylvania, the maritime forces of New York, and the principles of free exchange are all gravitating in an ideal direction. *Nothing less great than justice can keep them satisfied.*"² Not a niggardly justice, doling out the share of each, paring down one man's share that another may not have less than he, and making equality reside in mediocrity; but a largely distributive justice, scattering from full hands the products of human activity, and giving to each his due,

¹ Huret, *De San Francisco au Canada*, p. 29.

² Emerson, *Essays*.

in proportion to his personal worth and social usefulness. "To each according to his merit, to merit according to its works."

That this sort of justice is not precisely our own, that it would not satisfy the ideal aspirations of the European and especially of the French soul, may well be the case. Even in America it has come to seem insufficient to certain persons, and we know that Mr. Wilson, among others, has uttered a warning against it. It does not recognize what has been called "the claim of the weak upon the strong"; it recognizes no weak persons, it admits only or the strong; they alone have the right to share because they alone have a right to exist. But even in its pitiless narrowness there is a grandeur in its morality: *Be strong!* The first and perhaps the sole duty of man toward himself is fully to realize himself.

Thus everything in America is dominated by the idea of the human individual, that ardent, vivid personality who is seeking himself, who still, in large measure, has to find himself, but who, even in his present indetermination, gives us to trace the large outline of what he will be, or, better, of what he will make himself.

His first characteristic is restlessness. Externally it is manifested by "the essential mo-

bility of a people whose life is extremely strenuous, and whose eyes are constantly fixed, not upon the past, not even upon the present, but upon the future.”¹

Activity for the sake of activity, by a sense of excessive life, of superabundant energy which cannot but expend itself; this, far more than dollar-hunting, is the distinctive mark of the American. The pursuit of wealth is the apparent object, the expenditure of force is the real need.

Thus the future appears to him incoherent and confused, not as a definite aim upon which he has fixed his mind, but rather as an indefinite accumulation of possible activities. He desires to be rich, as a matter of course, but that is less an aim than a guiding thread in the labyrinth of existence. He does not sketch in advance the outlines of the form under which he will realize himself, he aspires to realize himself in no matter what form, provided it will pay. He marches forward in a world illimitably open to him, in which are vaguely sketched, imperfectly blocked out, myriads of forms, original and unforeseen. He will be one of these, no matter which, but above all he will be, if he can, something that he is not yet.

¹ *Les États-Unis et la France*. Address by Boutroux, p. 7.

It would seem that not long before his death William James thought of writing a *Metaphysic of the New, of Creation*,¹ which would have been the American metaphysic, the metaphysic of active empiricism. America might be defined as the onset of all individual wills for the assault of the unknown. The American lives in an intoxication of conquest, but his conquests are due to his creative activity. He is bent upon conquering that which is not, that is, upon producing.

De Rousiers glimpsed a part of the truth when he said: "That which enables the American to succeed, that which constitutes his type, which causes the sum of good to predominate over the sum of evil, is moral worth, personal energy, *creative energy*."² But the portrait lacks completion; that which, above all, the American tends to realize is himself, and in himself the new man, the man of to-morrow, him whom civilization awaits, hopes for, and has not yet produced.

Of this man we must again go to Emerson to fix the chief features, for he, more profoundly than any other, apprehended and incarnated the genius of his race. "The new time demands a new man, the *complementary man* whom this

¹ *Ib.*, p. 9.

² De Rousiers, *op. cit.*, p. 681.

country evidently ought to produce.”¹ This man will be “*the reforming man*,” “the courageous, integral man, who will discover or open a straight road to all that is good and excellent upon the earth.”² That he will one day be called to take the headship of the nations is the conviction of all, the conviction which President Wilson in his messages and addresses forcibly points out and claims. How shall the nations be remoulded after a new type, adapted to new mundane conditions, if man himself is not first remade? “Why was man born, if not to be a Reformer, a Re-maker of what man has done?”³ Let him first realize in himself and over himself the revolution of which he dreams for the universe. “Is not the highest duty to honor man in ourselves?”⁴ And the surest way to honor him is, first of all, to cause him to be born.

It would seem that, in fact, the future or, if you will, the mission of the American people is a mission of renaissance and renovation. Humanity is at the parting of the ways. It is impossible that it should be to-morrow what it was yesterday. A world is dying, a world is being born.

“*Un grand destin commence, un grand destin s’achève.*”

¹ Emerson, *Essays*.

² *Ib.*

³ *Ib.*

⁴ *Ib.*

The part of America, this new people among worn-out nations, may be immense, and it wills it to be so. After this war of Titans, from which Europe will issue decimated, exhausted, and in solution, she expects to furnish the type of humanity which will enable it to effect its own regeneration. She already foresees this, and that in endeavoring to fashion herself in conformity with her ambition and her destiny she is accomplishing a work of cosmical importance.

CHAPTER III

THE NATIONAL IDEAL

I

THE STATE

America "a nation of individuals."—Contrast between European nationalism and American individualism.—There is no American nation.—Weakness of political life.—Power of public opinion.—American democracy.

"**A**MERICA," said Emerson, "is a nation of individuals."¹

By this fact she is in strong contrast with other nations, and especially with France. There is little more than the word in common between the American nation and the nations of Europe. First of all, and above all, she is as little as possible a state.

The state is manifested above all by sovereignty. And this she concentrates in the hands of a governing class. It is by the state that a nation enters history, by the grouping of individuals who until then formed only a horde around a leader, "invested by them with full

¹ Emerson, *Essays*.

powers, and to whom they look for protection and defense.”

The first who became King was a successful soldier.

In the course of time this conception has become more or less profoundly modified, but it always bears the impress of its origin. Primarily the result of force, the state preserves its character of authority even when it takes on the most legal appearance. In some sort it towers above the individual, subordinating him to itself; endowed with large powers of coercion, it is tempted to employ them against the people, even when it is from them that it holds its powers.

As a result, those in whom the state is incarnated in vain call themselves only delegates or representatives—and this is the case only in democratic nations—they none the less feel themselves to be invested with exceptional authority, and hence before long they all come more or less to represent nothing but themselves. Where the parliamentary system acts as a corrective, it first utters a warning, and then brings about that convulsion which is known as the overturning of a ministry. But though the persons in a government be changed, the government persists; in vain is it renewed, in vain at

every moment of its existence is it responsible to the country; it is not long in again constituting itself as a factor apart, superimposed upon the nation when not opposed to it, existing in and for itself.

Not only does the nation consent to this domination, in general it begs for it. However much it may complain of the encroachments of power, it finds a power necessary. It needs direction, impulse, it often needs places and favors. It expects the state to act, thus dispensing itself from the necessity of action. One may judge of this by the continually arising complaints against "a government that does not govern," and demands for "a strong government." Subjects must have a master.

Doubtless this is above all true of autocracies, and in this sense Germany is the type of statehood, of the fetich state, the "Great Being" which absorbs and annihilates individuals. But the democracies of Europe are, to a great degree, penetrated by the same spirit. It might almost be said that they regret the tutelage from which they have been too early emancipated. France, after its numberless revolutions, and its nearly fifty years of republican rule, looks to its government for everything, and lives by an administrative organization bequeathed to it by the

First Empire. England itself, free England, has not escaped the contagion. Let us not forget that it was an Englishman, Spencer, who wrote the well-known squib, "The Individual Against the State." Even revolutionary Russia, born but yesterday, drunk with freedom, is already experiencing the imperative need of rallying around a provisional government at the risk of disintegration, finding in it almost the equivalent of a committee of public safety.

In short, it is the property of Europe to be governed, at the peril of risking destruction. Outside of the system of statehood there is room only for anarchy. She more or less tempers this system by an appeal to that instrument of control, parliament, but the very existence of parliamentarianism proves the power of the state. It is the remedy, side by side with the disease, the safeguard against an always possible and always dreaded abuse of power.

Now in America there is nothing of the kind. In spite of entirely superficial resemblances, *there is no American statehood*. America knows nothing of statehood. It may not even be said that she is anti-statist, but if one dare risk the barbarism, she is a-statist. In America the collectivity resolves itself into the single indi-

viduals that compose it. They carry on their public business themselves far more than they delegate it to others.

All who have travelled in the United States have become aware of the laxity of public life. One is hardly aware of the existence of a government. This arises both from the structure of the American Constitution and the state of public spirit. "There is in the American Government, considered as a whole, a want of unity. Its branches are unconnected and their efforts are not directed to one aim, do not produce one harmonious result."¹ It would seem that both it and the diverse parts of its mechanism are characterized by the same spirit of independence that we have noted in the citizens of the Union. There is no concerted action, no co-operation between the Houses, the President, the federal courts; each plays its own part without concerning itself about its neighbor. And the nation concerns itself the less, because it does not suffer from the situation. It does not expect to be given its *a*, its key-note, and still less that its work should be done for it. "That which comes to pass seems not to be a result of the action of the legal organs of the state, but of some larger force, which at one

¹ Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, I, p. 287.

time uses their discord as its means, at another neglects them altogether.”¹

In consequence, elective functions are lightly esteemed, and are abandoned to professional politicians. The latter, though within the last few years their lead has tended to improve, are often despicable, and still more often despised. Politics is the career of those who have and can have no other; it is adopted by those who have failed in other professions, for private enterprises suffice, and more than suffice, to absorb the energies of the sound population. In general, “Politics are less interesting in America than in Europe,” and do not lead so far, while other careers are relatively more important and lead farther.²

Thus, here more than elsewhere the electoral parties are syndicates of powerfully organized and unscrupulous private interests. The “boss” is king, and in case of need does not shrink from corruption or fraud. His party is concerned with satisfying its adherents and getting places for its members. The general welfare is its smallest concern.

The result is a dangerous condition which has been many a time pointed out, but the importance of which must not be exaggerated—it is

¹ *Ib.*, I, p. 288.

² *Ib.*, II, pp. 38, 39, *passim*, p. 283.

less in America than elsewhere. Mr. Roosevelt has pointed out that "in the long run the politics of fraud and treachery and foulness are impractical politics," and "the most practical of all politicians is the politician who is clean and decent and upright."¹ President Wilson, more disquieted by this occult influence, laments that authority has been confiscated by a handful of leaders who manipulate the people in the dark and make demands upon the government in the light of day. "Government must . . . be absolutely public in everything that affects it."²

But in reality it is external in every essential point. In normal times the people of the United States leave the President and the Houses to attend to their business; but let a crisis come and they know how to act for themselves. Then the active members of the population take public affairs in hand. They do it with their usual decision, at times by summary processes, of which lynch-law affords an example. They form vigilance committees, which control the functioning of the administrative machinery, free associations which deal with urgent difficulties. Then, their duty done, they return to their private affairs.

¹ Roosevelt, *American Ideals*, p. 36.

² Woodrow Wilson, *The New Freedom*, p. 130.

In such cases it would never occur to them to seek the support of the public powers. In America they are accustomed to depend only upon themselves; all they ask of the state is neither to favor nor to impede individual effort. What Tocqueville wrote has not ceased to be true: "The inhabitant of the United States is taught from his birth that he must depend upon himself in his struggle against the ills and difficulties of life; he looks upon the social authorities with an uneasy and defiant eye, and only appeals to their power when he can do no otherwise." ¹

This power exists only by him, and he knows it. The representatives of the nation are invested with but limited means of action, and for a short space of time. The office-holder is truly, in a certain degree, immediately and directly dependent upon the elector. The will of the people acts directly and constantly upon the legislative and executive mandatories.² While the German Reichstag, in spite of appearances, is merely the servant of the Emperor, while the French and English Parliaments are really the representatives of the nation, the Congress of the United States is nothing of the kind. "In America Congress is not the na-

¹ De Tocqueville, *op. cit.*

² Bryce, *op. cit.*, II, p. 225.

tion, and does not claim to be so,"¹ for "the mass of the citizens may be deemed as . . . the supreme power."² President Wilson, following the example of Mr. Roosevelt, and especially of Mr. Bryan, claims new powers for the people, the "initiative" of laws, the "referendum," and the "recall" of functionaries. We need, he says, "to take charge of our own affairs."³ Without discussing the potentialities of these methods of action, it may be said that there is no country in which they appear to be less necessary, for even when the people act by their representatives it is always they who act, and no one can evade their will. "Towering over presidents and State governors, over Congress and State legislatures, over conventions and the vast machinery of party, public opinion stands out in the United States as the great source of power, the master of servants, who tremble before it."⁴

It is in this sense that America is a democracy, perhaps the only truly constituted democracy, in which, as we shall see, the citizen always finds himself confronted with *law*, but never with *power*. It is truly the republic, the "public thing," the thing of all, that in

¹ *Ib.*, p. 228.

² Woodrow Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

³ *Ib.*, p. 227.

⁴ Bryce, *op. cit.*, II, p. 225.

which it suffices that each one shall freely develop himself in order to take his part in sovereignty. There is in the whole world no country whose impulsion comes less from above, where it comes more from beneath, from the lowest stratum of the population. In this congeries of individual activities the common and collective will is only the natural result of many dispersed efforts. "What is called the republic in the United States is the slow, quiet action of society upon itself. It is a true state, really founded upon the enlightened will of the people."¹

II

THE DECLARATION OF RIGHTS

The United States were born of Right and not of Fact.—Individual rights: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.—National rights.—Independence and moral personality.—"Righteous insurrection."—Rejection of the "strong government."—The United States a government of *men*.

Thus it was by the affirmation of their will to be, that the United States constituted themselves a nation. The date of their existence can be fixed. Of how many peoples could as much be said? Before the Declaration of Independence in 1776, there was nothing. From

¹ De Tocqueville, *op. cit.*, II, p. 400.

the moment of that declaration there was an American nation, founded upon a legal basis.

It is in fact the distinctive character of the United States to have been born of law and not of fact, or rather of having made fact to proceed from law. Everywhere else the nation existed before the law; here, the law, the charter of recognized and unanimously accepted liberties, created the nation. The will to be, manifested in the form of a contract, preceded and made actual the being. The American colonists, by proclaiming the rights of man as the condition of a people's existence, for the first time in history showed, and proved by example, not only that a nation belongs only to itself, but that it ought to make itself, to create itself by its own effort. At the basis of the national compact there was neither the violence of a victor nor the constraint nor the gratuitous kindness of a master, bad or good, nor yet a series of accidents and contingencies, of confused instincts and vague, sentimental affinities. There was a free contract, an act of reason, a ripely considered determination. "It was the realization of sovereignty, not in isolated, arbitrary, unreflecting decisions, influenced by passion or interest, but in a legally constituted state." ¹

¹ *Les États-Unis et la France*. Address by Mr. D. J. Hill, p. 208.

The essential principle of the Constitution, as it springs from the Declaration of Independence, is the rights of the individual as basis, principle, and end of the collectivity. The nation, a collective person, has no other entity than its citizens, individual persons.

Such is in fact the sound democratic tradition, forcibly expounded by Mr. Baldwin and always faithfully acted upon by the United States. In this tradition "the state is only a means, an instrument of the nation, not an end in itself; a means of realizing personal and social values, determined by free citizens in the course of their free development, and chosen for their free happiness."¹ The state, therefore, reduces itself to the part of a tool, having only "an instrumental and not an absolute value."² It has no real existence, no proper personality, except in the man, the citizen.

The citizen, therefore, has natural rights antecedent to any agreement, which the national compact may and should recognize and sanction, but which it has no power to create. Such rights are "inalienable."

What are they? The Declaration of Independence touches upon only the most important among them: "Among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

¹ Professor Mark Baldwin, *American Neutrality*, p. 96. ² *Ib.*, p. 96.

Let us recognize the original character of this utterance; it is specifically American. These recognized rights are neither purely negative nor yet properly positive. The American asks nothing of the state except guarantees, but he demands that they be complete: he is not to be threatened as to his life, nor disturbed in his liberty, *nor checked or delayed in his pursuit of happiness*. It is not the purpose of the state to make the individual happy: he has not even "the right" to happiness, nor even, in the large sense in which the revolutionists of 1848 understood it, the *right to life*. The hypothesis of a Providence-state, dear to certain socialistic schools, is repugnant to the Yankee spirit of initiative. He does not ask earthly manna of the public powers, the crumb which shall put him beyond the reach of want, for he recognizes no power greater than his own. He relies upon his own energy, his unaided power, to make his life, and it may even be said that he knows how to make himself happy without help. "I do not want to live under philanthropy, I do not want to be taken care of by the government either directly or by any instrumentality through which the government is acting. *I want only to have right and justice prevail so far as I am concerned.* Give me

right and justice and I will undertake to take care of myself.”¹ Even those whom, like President Wilson, one would sometimes be inclined to look upon as interventionists, have a horror of the intrusion of the state into the affairs of private individuals, and limit it to a minimum. “It is always insupportable that government should intervene in your private activities, unless it be to set them free.”²

All that the American asks of the state, therefore, is to guarantee him the full and free use of all his faculties, physical, intellectual, and moral. Not by a passive and platonic respect; he demands efficient collaboration, an effort parallel to his own. The individual has a “right” to “the pursuit of happiness.” It is for the government to clear his road, to remove obstacles, to assure him freedom of movement. The state must give him a fair field at home, and be his watch-dog abroad. At home its function is first of all to secure his activities from check, but it is also to stimulate them, to point their way, to guide them into new fields where the prospect of success appears to be best assured. With regard to foreigners it is to act as in some sort a filter: it must close the door to products which would compete

¹ Woodrow Wilson, *The New Freedom*, p. 198.

² *Ib.*

with American industry upon its own soil, as also to such social derelicts as would live as parasites at his expense; but it must open the door wide to manufactured objects which home industry fails to produce, as well as to works useful to develop its productivity. In both cases it has in view only the rights and interests of the American citizen. Practising this kind of "sacred selfishness" it enables him to use all his powers to their highest point, while at the same time it is careful not to act in his place. It gives him facilities, means of action, but it never does his work for him. The individual alone counts, indeed, but he may count only upon himself. "Let the individual be, if he will and can be."

The immediate corollary of individual freedom is national liberty. A citizen should exercise his rights, put forth his energy, in the nation of his choice. A mother country should be consented to, not imposed. Thus the idea of personality naturally extends from the individual to the collectivity. Every nation is a moral person that should shape its own destiny. It has not, we must observe, an existence of its own outside of and distinct from the people who constitute it. It is only the expression of a collective and so to say unanimous aggregation of

individual wills, which alone count. It exists as does an "association," which, outside of the associates that compose it, is only a *statute*, a sort of codification of essential agreements. But, as such, this association holds a rank at once ideal and real among legal existences. It has rights to assert, claims to enforce. When it speaks it is regarded as expressing the opinion of all who compose it, by whom and for whom it exists. From the day when it ceases to express them faithfully, it has only a fictitious existence, and should be dissolved to make room for a new grouping which shall really express the will of the contracting parties.

Now it is precisely this that has legitimized the founding of the United States as a nation. Until then bound to the mother country, New England held to Old England only by habit and constraint. Thence the right of the American people to "assume among the powers of the earth the *separate* and *equal* station to which the laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them." "Equal station," that is to say, repudiation of all subordination, all allegiance of people to people as of man to man. One people is worth as much as another, just as one man is worth as much as another, neither more nor less, and for precisely the same reasons.

"Separate station," that is to say, total and even jealous independence of a nation which, at least in its beginning, affirms its sincere detachment from European interests, but insists that in return Europe shall not meddle with its own. Europe for Europeans, and America for Americans; thus is individualism exalted into a doctrine.

The government of the United States was constituted in opposition to despotism, and the first right that it insisted upon was that of righteous insurrection against the oppressor. After enunciating the liberties which it claims for the individual, the Declaration of Independence lays stress upon the revolutionary idea. "To secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. . . . Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it." Again, and above all, "when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, *it is their duty* [italics the author's], to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security."

No doubt these utterances were directed

against English domination, but they have the value of a principle, and transcend the circumstances which gave them birth; they express the very meaning of the American charter and of every truly democratic charter. They lay down the immovable foundation of individual liberty: *A government has no existence of its own.* It has no inherent rights, but only duties toward the collectivity, and only the extremely limited and severely controlled rights expressly conferred by the collectivity to make possible the discharge of its duties. Derived from no transcendent principle, *it has no sovereignty.* The sole sovereignty is popular sovereignty drawing from individuals its force and the reason for its being.

Thence this necessary consequence: *A strong government is not necessary; a weak government is necessary that the individual may be strong.* The strength of a government is in directly inverse ratio to the weakness of the governed. We may judge by Germany, whose Chancellor, the organ of the Emperor, imposes his will upon the Reichstag and the nation. The Americans, having suffered, and especially having taken the risk of greater suffering, have recognized and warded off this danger. Their entire political life has developed in the direction of the weak-

ening of public powers and the strengthening of private liberties. Essential decisions have always come from the very substructure of the people. Action has always presupposed the consent of public opinion. The American may permit himself to be convinced; he will never suffer himself to be commanded.

Consequently there are as few and as weak relations between the governing classes and the governed as possible. Washington proudly asserted that "among all the governments hitherto instituted among men, there has been none containing more checks and barriers, and barriers more difficult to overturn, against the introduction of tyranny."¹ The American knows that he has made a tool to be used, not a master to be served.

But that this should be the case, the people of the United States must needs be very strong. *Laissez aller* soon degenerates into anarchy where there is not a "regulated freedom." Washington himself more than once showed his concern on this point. He even went so far, in a private letter, as to suggest a "coercive power."² The event proved his fears to have been unfounded. Liberty was not regulated from without, but it learned how to regulate

¹ Quoted by Fabre, *Washington*, p. 310.

² *Ib.*, p. 268.

itself, without appealing to guardian or master. Not that there is not in the United States a better class that leads and a crowd that follows. In this society of equals, all in a sense constitute the better class—not by intelligence or intellectuality—the race is rough-hewn and ill educated—but by will, by the power to work, by the sense of initiative. Their activities do not need to be guided from without, as a shepherd guides his flock, for there is no flock. There are no *moujiks* in the United States. Every one knows how to guide himself, to decide for himself. Under conditions radically different and upon a vaster scale, the American republic offers a point of resemblance to the Athenian republic: it is a republic of *men*. What the citizen of Attica was by culture and refinement of thought, the citizen of New York and Chicago is by the strength, the harshness even, of his indefatigable activity—an *autonomous creature*.

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III

THE UNION

Heterogeneous character of the United States.—They form a union, but not a *unit*.—Autonomy and equality of the various states.—Possible conflicts between states and union.—Flexibility of the unified organization.

“Union and liberty”; such is the device of the great republic beyond the sea, liberty in and by union, union at once the guarantee and the instrument of liberty.

But to posit the problem is not to solve it, and the difficulty is to reconcile two terms that seem to be antagonistic. How conserve the integral liberty of each without diminishing the strength which results from the union of all? How maintain and strengthen the bond which alone can insure the cohesion of the individuals without trenching upon their rights? The American solution, at once realistic and idealistic, is a legal solution. Nothing but a legal bond can be at once strong enough to insure the unity of the whole and flexible enough to permit the relative independence and liberty of movement of the parts. The power of the politician is, therefore, lessened while that of the judge is increased. The dominating idea in the United States is not the idea of the *state*

but of the *constitution*. It is the law which finally brings unity into this heterogeneous mass.

Heterogeneous it is indeed politically, and that is what at first strikes the visitor. There is no centralization in America; the radiation of the administrative power begins on all sides and ends nowhere. The idea of primacy is utterly lacking and forbids the constitution of any body in which authority, coming from above, spreads abroad to the lowest through a series of ramified channels. In America the administration does not function as a whole. The administration is not a whole. "It is a *group of persons*, each of whom depends individually upon the President and implicates his responsibility. There is no political unity, no collective responsibility."¹ So strong is the individualistic imprint upon this people that it appears in that which, by definition, seems inevitably to eliminate it, this aggregate of functionaries. A functionary is an individual who is responsible to another individual for his individual acts. He has not to protect subordinates or to be protected by superiors; he operates in his sphere of operations with more liberty but at his own risk. And his respon-

¹ Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, I, p. 87.

sibility, in the long run, is appreciated by his electors.

This gives a strange aspect to the country. One seeks in vain the strong timber-work, the solid trussing, which upholds this vast body. One would say that this immense organism is that of an invertebrate.

In the first place America is a *union* and not a *unit*; it is formed by the juxtaposition of independent states which drew together in the interest of self-defense; but each of which, above all things, made a point of preserving its independence and individual physiognomy. Here again the resemblance to Greece comes naturally to mind. In ancient times there was never, strictly speaking, a *Greece*, and yet there was a *Greek people*. The various cities, Thebes, Athens, Corinth, Sparta, the islands, had each its constitution, its laws, its manners. The state was limited to the *polis*. Let danger threaten from without, an oriental invasion, for instance, and they came together spontaneously; but diversity remained even in the uniting of interests and the community of aspirations. In different proportions there was something analogous to the alliance which, at the present day, brings the civilized nations together in a compact union to struggle against German imperialism.

It was an alliance of the same order that *united* the *States*, and organized them into a confederation. America worsted the potentate as Greece checked the invader, by binding into a *Society of States* (harbinger and model of the *Society of Nations* of which Mr. Wilson dreams) these groups, distinct in fact but united in a single thought of freedom. Drawn together at once by their interests and their ideal, the countries that formed the union consented to a solid and durable bond, but refused fusion. They simply formed a mass against the common enemy, retaining only so much of national unity as was strictly necessary for attaining the desired end.

Therefore they fully proposed to conserve as individuals the independence which they had conquered as a group. And in this way the United States, constituting themselves such, presented the strange and somewhat hybrid aspect of a creature at the same time one and many: among themselves they were a union; to the eye of the foreigner they were forming a *nation*.

No doubt in the course of time distinctions faded away, and there was a tendency toward fusion; but it is still very far from being realized. Many things naturally retard it: the immensity

of the American continent, opposing interests which, after long causing friction between the North and the South, in our days is more manifest between the East and the West, the inhabitants of the Pacific coast fixing their eyes and their purposes upon Asia, those upon the Atlantic shore turning theirs toward Europe. To these we may especially add State constitutions, giving a material form to local patriotism.

Such a conflict of interest, though attenuated, still persists between the *state* and the *union*, between particularism and federalism. The American accommodates himself to it well enough. He admits as natural "the existence of a double government, a double allegiance, a double patriotism."¹ He is nationally "double" with almost as much ease as we are "simple." "Every American citizen lives in a duality of which Europeans, always excepting the Swiss and to some extent the Germans, have no experience. . . . He (the American) lives under two governments and two sets of laws; he is animated by two patriotisms and owes two allegiances."²

It is true that these do not lie in the same

¹ Bryce, *op. cit.*, I, p. 32.

² *Ib.*, II, p. 426. The important—and often if not dangerous at least menacing—effects of this duality have been indicated by Mr. Baldwin, *American Neutrality*, first lecture, pp. 3-7 and *passim*.

plane. One is the government that might be called normal and, so to speak, daily; it is the rule. The other, if not abnormal, is at least an intermittent government; it forms the exception. Even at the present time it may almost be said that America does not exist every day. It exists especially in periods of crisis: the day of a presidential election, of the explosion of the *Maine*, or of the rupture of diplomatic relations with Germany. On such days, if one may still discern in the whole mass a few elements of resistance—certain imperfectly assimilated fomenters of trouble—they are swept away by the broad current which, carrying all wills with it, makes the nation. This is the America that applauds Mr. Wilson's Message, that receives Marshal Joffre and Minister Viviani in a delirium of joy, that rushes in a mass to the enlistment offices. But calmness soon returns, the bond is relaxed without being dissolved, and local self-interests resume their sway.

But, notwithstanding fears manifested in Washington, this is not dangerous. In spite of a few clashings and frictions, harmony exists between the whole and the parts. Men accept and, even with the founder of the nation, insist upon "a central power safeguarding order

and the common interest,"¹ and this power in its turn shows itself as respectful of the liberty of the states as they and itself are respectful of the liberty of the citizens. For it is liberty which at once sustains the entire edifice and all its parts. "America is a republic of republics."²

Within itself each State retains its independence, elects its own governor and other officers, and makes its own laws. In its relations with the others it stands on terms of equality. If in the House of Representatives each State is represented according to its population, it sends two delegates to the Senate whatever its relative importance, whether its inhabitants be numbered by thousands or millions. Politically, *there are no small States*, any more than individually there are lesser citizens. This is evidently explained by the fact that the Constitution was careful to consider the susceptibilities and anticipate the solitudes of the less powerful States; it was the work of "restless individualists";³ but we must also observe the care for justice which animated all the constituents; not one of them would have permitted any encroachment upon his own rights, nor permit himself to encroach upon those of others. These

¹ Fabre, *Washington*, p. 90.

² Bryce, *op. cit.*, I, 33.

³ Boutmy, *Études de droit constitutionnel*, p. 192.

“Brothers of Freedom” formed a “Society of Equals.”

More than this. This Union, formed by the will of the contracting parties, refused to add to itself by force. For a *policy of annexation* it proposed to substitute a *policy of association*. Every time that it enlarged its bounds it was as the result of mutual consent. When Territories were transformed into States they by that act acquired all the rights of the States that had earlier been constituted. America has suffered too much in her own person not to revolt from employing European methods of colonization or even of protection. She calls to freedom those whom she welcomes to herself. And, as in all her other enterprises, the commercial aspect meets the ideal view. Her development is that of a prosperous company which, while extending its sphere of business and taking in new associates, immediately gives to all a share in its profits, granting to eleventh-hour stockholders the same advantages as to those of the early days. Her politics admit of no such factors as “original” and “preferred” shares.

It is certain that she desires to extend herself, and it is impossible not to recognize the existence of an American imperialism. But

even in her territorial ambitions she proposes to base act upon right. According to her definition, and very sincerely, the Monroe Doctrine is only a just insistence upon American independence. When she proclaims that "the American continents, by the free and independent position which they have assumed and maintained, may henceforth never be considered by any European Power as a domain for colonization," she only takes her stand against all foreign intervention, rather setting limits to European ambition than asserting her own. She has lately uttered the same sentiment by the mouth of one of her ambassadors, Mr. D. J. Hill. The Monroe Doctrine expresses the right of independent nations to maintain their own forms of government, and to protest against any nation entering upon a policy of such a nature as to endanger their security.¹ It is, therefore, not a menace to any established rights, but a *veto* opposed to the acquisition of new rights, of new claims with which the Old World might propose to burden the New. There is, perhaps, a hope (doubtless more distant to-day than ever before) of seeing at a future day the great neighbor States, Canada and Mexico, entering the Union. But if that

¹ *Les États-Unis et la France.* Address of Mr. Hill.

day ever comes, it will not come through pressure exerted by the United States, but will be the result of the spontaneous adherence of the nations concerned. And in such a case their independence and "self-government" would be fully respected.

IV

THE PRESIDENT

He symbolizes *the Union*.—His powers.—His moral strength: he is the conscience of the United States.—His judicial and arbitral character.—He holds his power only from the people.

If *liberty* is everywhere, *union*, often less manifest, is symbolized in a striking manner, not in a parliament, but in a man, the President of the republic. This is the secret of his power and authority; it explains their increase in times of national crisis. Certainly he could not say with Louis XIV, of whom he is the absolute antithesis, "I am the state," but he might assert, giving the word its true meaning, "I am the nation." He does more than represent it, he expresses it, not only in the eyes of the world but in his own eyes.

There is, perhaps, nowhere upon earth so marked a personality as that of the President of the American Republic. It leaves far behind it that of an Emperor of Germany or a Czar of

Russia—when Russia had a Czar. To find its equivalent we must look to the Vatican, and we shall see that, in fact, the comparison is not purely artificial. He exercises a true pontificate, temporal and spiritual, in his country.

If such a thing exists anywhere in this land of liberty, its power is in him, and in him only—so far as it is in a man. It is not in Congress, however much during recent years the latter has endeavored to extend its authority. It is to be found only in this “President, invested with almost royal prerogatives,”¹ before whom more than one constitutional European monarch would indeed appear in a sufficiently humble light. His personal influence is considerable. In all American life he is almost the only man who counts. The rest exist only in relations with him. His ministers are his clerks. He alone is responsible to Congress, which, during his entire term of office, has no other weapon against him than the procedure of “impeachment.” He is armed with the *veto*, which suspends their decisions. He communicates with them by messages, and receives directions from them much less than he lays upon them his own. He is not more or less relegated to the shade, as in France, where the personality of

¹ Izoulet, preface to the translation of *The New Freedom*, p. 10.

the head of the state is overshadowed by that of the president of the Council. He resolutely takes the headship of the country, and during all his magistrature he has almost the figure of a sovereign. Finally, he is re-eligible, in principle, indefinitely, at the conclusion of his term, and in fact he is generally re-elected, though only once. His election evokes a veritable national crisis over the entire territory of the Union. It would seem at such a moment, not so much that the life of a party is at stake—American parties are, on the whole, factitious—as the very existence of the country. The American seems to be asking himself: "What shall I be? To what am I coming? What will my choice do to myself?"

The peril is, in fact, hardly less than this. The President of the United States is, at the same time, the representative man of the United States and the arbiter of its destiny. The nation is incarnated in him, and is transformed by him. If he truly understands the part he has to play, he should be, not "the President of a national council of administration," as Mr. Wilson reproached his predecessors with having too often been, but "the President of the people of the United States."¹ He is only their

¹ Woodrow Wilson, *The New Freedom*, p. 74.

“mouthpiece,” their “speaking-trumpet.” “It is not his business to judge *for* the nation, but to judge through the nation as its spokesman and voice.”¹

Thence his function appears to be formidable, and even surpasses that of the head of a State. He is not there merely to govern. His true duty is to speak the right and cause it to become a fact. He is generally a lawyer, and it is fitting that he should be a legislator. Briefly invested with exorbitant powers, it is expected of him to have a will and to realize it in acts. A dictator in fact, he exercises a true moral dictatorship. Far more than the representative of the United States, he is its conscience. He is the only man in this country, this continent, this world, who is the elect of the entire territory, the only man who is chosen not by a fraction of the country but by the country as a whole. This explains how, as soon as he is declared elected, all bow before him; his opponent of the day before is the first to pay his respects to him publicly. In him he salutes the nation, and the nation salutes itself.

But this nation, made up of so many different elements, is a confused, inconstant, excitable mass, ignorant of itself, seeking to know itself,

¹ *Ib.*, p. 73.

but purposing to be. It expects of the President that he will utter the moral formula by which it may discover and express itself. In him and by him it hopes to assume a body, a definite form, and become conscious of its destiny. We have already said that one author has spoken of his prerogatives as "almost royal." A better word would have been "pontifical." He rules over minds quite as much as over bodies. "They who administer our physical life therefore administer our spiritual life."¹ He is charged in some sort to make sure that each one obtains his daily bread, and especially to distribute among men that spiritual bread, justice. He is where he is that justice may be upon earth for all men of good-will. This is not to be a king, but a pope.

In fact, his messages have in some sort an encyclical tone. He has, and he sometimes gives to others, the feeling that he is exercising a providential mission. He speaks to his adherents in the language that they like to hear and that suits their nature, the language of jurisprudence. He understands, he defends, sometimes he furthers the interests of his people, but he does it always under the ægis of the law.

¹ *Ib.*, p. 199.

Thence flows his authority, and it is immense. America not only returns to herself in him, she finds herself there. It is his to cause the America of to-morrow to spring from the America of to-day, a better world from the present world. In the clear but apparently somewhat dry and rigid form characteristic of this people, there is in him something of the inspiration of the prophet, to the end that he may exercise that which is more than a function, a sacerdotal office.

But here let no one deceive himself; his strength comes from the people whose expression he is, from the public opinion that finds in him its voice, and even its soul. "The President is personally responsible . . . to the people by whom he is chosen."¹ Whatever may be his personal worth—and it is often considerable—it is nothing by itself and without this point of support. He may have no personal ambition, may not dream of establishing his dominion over the country by a sudden act of force. He may only seek his way among all the currents of contrary opinions and endeavor to become at every moment the faithful representative of what is confusedly thought and willed by the mass from whose bosom he has

¹ Bryce, *op cit.*, I, 69.

emerged, and over whom he hovers as arbiter and guide. Not that he should be their reflection or echo, content himself with a sheep-like and passive execution of orders emanating from below. On the contrary, he must have a powerful personality, one in which are concentrated all other personalities, and which, when the moment for action comes, can perform precisely what the nation expects of him, that is, of itself.

There are, indeed, some peculiarly tragic moments in which, in the midst of the hurricane, the national will feels that it should decide for itself, and knows not clearly what decision it should make. In such moments of indecision and hesitation, which every man knows, and in which his destiny is fixed, when one is at the parting of the ways, it may well be that a strong individuality may direct the nation into one path rather than another. But even then it simply makes a channel for energies already existing and reveals them to themselves. Perhaps, before President Wilson said the decisive words, America was not sure that she desired war with Germany; perhaps if he had not uttered them (admitting the possibility of such a thing) she would not have entered the arena. But from the day when they were spoken she recog-

nized them as her own. By his lips the nation had pronounced its verdict.

Such is the power of the President. His authority is moral and legal, the authority of a judge. He does not so much reach decisions as pronounce sentences.

Thus we are led up to what constitutes the very essence of American politics, the idea of *justice*, and to that which is, for Americans, as the Table of the Law, on which are engraved the imperishable principles of justice, the *Constitution*.

V

THE LAW

Pre-eminence of the judicial power.—The *Supreme Court* the guardian of the *Constitution*.—Unity of legal orientation.—Every functionary is a *judge* giving sentence in accordance with the *Constitution*.—The States “centrifugal forces,” and the Constitution the “centripetal force.”—Justice and legality the bases of the American nation.—“Honesty is the best policy.”—The unity of America and “the Indestructibility of the Union.”

In the United States the real power is not political but judicial. Above Congress, above the President, stands the Supreme Court, the guardian and interpreter of the Constitution. Composed of seven federal judges who are statesmen as well as legists, it is this court which finally by its interpretations and decisions

maintains the moral and political unity of the country.

Imagine the French *Cour de Cassation* invested with such powers as this court creates—not only uniformity of legal process in private quarrels, not only a like uniformity in those differences which bring individuals into conflict with the machinery of the State, but also uniformity of views and tendencies in differences between the States themselves. The Supreme Court is a great council which legally and sovereignly decides all questions of every order, public or private, political, social, even diplomatic, which can arise within the Union. It summons nations as well as individuals to its bar. For the different fractions of the United States it is what The Hague Tribunal would fain have been for the different fractions of the civilized world. The State of Ohio pleads against the State of New York as, in a memorable case, France pleaded against Italy. But instead of being a special tribunal whose chief function is to conciliate and treat with circumspection the parties at issue, instead of always being aware over its head of that “appeal” to arms which, at least until now, has been the ultimate reason of peoples in litigation, it pronounces with authority, and all bow before its

decisions. Superior to the legislative power, to the executive power, with no risk of being held in check by a military power that has no existence, the Supreme Court represents that true principle of unity which has hitherto been sought in vain. The unity of the United States is less one of fact than of ideal. If one may so speak, it is a unity of juristic orientation.

Just as in France the entire magistrature, in all its ranks, has its eyes fixed on the *Cour de Cassation* (Court of Appeals), and draws inspiration from its decisions, so here every magistrate of every order and degree turns toward the Supreme Court to throw light upon and determine their decisions. They know, indeed, that by hearkening to or imitating it they run no risk of departing from the law. The Supreme Court has always confined itself to its judicial functions, has placed itself outside of and above all individual and even national questions, has never discredited its authority by permitting itself to be influenced by political passions or prepossessions. It has always been true to its functions, which are to act against the abuse of power and the violation of the Constitution. It considers "itself as a pure organ of *the law*, commissioned to do justice between man and man." ¹

¹ Bryce, *op. cit.*, I, 376.

Thus the Constitution, interpreted by the Supreme Court, is to the American magistrate what the Code interpreted by the *Cour de Cassation* is to the French magistrate. It may, therefore, be understood that there exists a solid if intangible bond between the members of this administration, which is yet so little centralized and not at all pontifical. American office-holders have not in the least their eyes fixed upon a chief, a superior, upon whom they depend; their eyes are fixed upon the law, or rather upon the Constitution, which it is for them to apply in the sphere of their respective functions. As a consequence they seek direction, not, as with us, in capricious and changeable ministerial instructions, but in immutable principles from which they may not depart.

Thence it arises that, notwithstanding the faults and even the vices of some among them, notwithstanding the too numerous examples of corruption and venality in their ranks, they represent to their fellow citizens something entirely different from that which their European colleagues represent to those under their jurisdiction. "The European often sees in the public functionary only force; the American sees in him the law. One may then say that in

America a man never obeys another man, but always justice and the law.”¹

The fact that the functionary is elected, not named by the central power, can only reinforce the legal character with which he is clothed. His origin perhaps may lead to the suspicion that he is accessible to too many personal influences, dominated by party or society spirit. But, on the other hand, he has the confidence of the public. More than anything else the elected officer takes on the character of an umpire.

This need of arbitration always makes itself strongly felt in young societies, spontaneously formed, whose rights are less clearly defined, their titles more readily disputable. We see it in the early days of the Roman republic, we see it also in the American republic, of relatively recent formation. The magistrate there appears somewhat as a judge, having either to pronounce between private interests or in disputes continually arising between private persons and the society of which they are members—village or county.

But if every magistrate is something of a judge, the judge properly so-called seems like a privileged magistrate. In fact, even to-day he is clothed with immense political power.

¹ De Tocqueville, *De la Démocratie en Amérique*, I, 157.

Such a conception is necessary in a country where society is still so near to a state of nature, and where, consequently, all possible power must be given to the law, to prevent the individual being subjected to the law of force.

But the law itself sometimes risks being defective. It may be the work of a party; it may, at least in certain cases, have been made by uneducated and inexperienced legislators. In such cases it is the duty of the judge to pronounce, not in accordance with, but against the law. This is why the Americans have recognized in their judges the right to base their decisions upon the Constitution, and not upon the laws, and not to enforce laws that appear to them to be unconstitutional. It is indeed not enough to say that this is their right, it is their duty, an imperious precept. The humblest judge in an American State is *obliged* to pronounce upon the constitutionality of a law.¹

A dreadful obligation, an exorbitant power, if ever there was one. The judge is the judge not only of cases but of laws; he is the judge not only of parties but of legislators. So that in each particular State in the Union generally this menace always hangs over the heads of those who make the law: they are themselves

¹ Bryce, *Ab. Ed.*, p. 384.

amenable to the conscience of the judge enlightened by the Constitution.

The Constitution, which dominates all laws, cannot be modified by a law, but only by a direct popular vote. And this may occur, in a given State, only on exceptional occasions, and in the Union still more seldom. There is, then, something immutable in this land of universal change, and this something is the law of the laws. It may become more pliable with time, adapt itself to divers circumstances, but fundamentally it remains identical with itself, and maintains the substantial identity of the United States. It is in some sort the gazing-point of all citizens, causes all thoughts and wills to converge in one direction, imposes moral unity upon this fluctuating diversity. Everything gravitates toward it, and this is how unity is made among these scattered elements. Each atom acts upon its own impulse, but all are attracted to the same sun.

This is not a mere comparison, but the accurate expression of a fact. The difficulty, apparently insoluble, was to bring together in one unaccustomed movement elements carried along by diverse impulses. The different States represent so many "existing centrifugal forces," ¹

¹ Bryce, *ib*, p. 11.

each seeking, like the planets of the solar system, to fly off in divergent directions. It was necessary, without suppressing them, to subject them to a *centripetal* force, which should bring them all into harmony while respecting the independence of each. The United States discovered how to perform this feat.

Look at the country. Everything seems to tend to resolve it into its constituent parts. Here, first of all, are distinct nations, with the inevitable rivalries and competitions which such distinctions imply. The only feature which they seem at first sight to possess in common is that in each there is nothing in common among the people that compose them. Everywhere are only restless individuals, turned loose, hustling one another and being hustled in their turn. Every one goes at *gee* and *haw*, each taking his own way without caring what becomes of his neighbor. It is a foam of States, each resolving itself into a foam of individuals. And yet equilibrium takes place, the nation emerges from the very movement that carries them all along. This is what there is in an association, unconscious, perhaps, but sincere and strong, in any great idea, in any principle of common action. "Hitch your wagon to a star," said Emerson to his fellow citizens.

They all hitched theirs to the same star, the star of justice, which took on in their eyes the concrete form of the Constitution. Here is the fixed point for the American, the object of his simple and tenacious faith. "Before all else he believes in the Constitution, which protects life, liberty, and property."¹

Is this to say that the Constitution is perfect? No more than any other human work, and it has incurred many criticisms. Washington, who saw and exaggerated its imperfections, finding in it "a host of vices and inexpediciencies,"² blamed it for not giving sufficiently extensive powers to the central government, and for "probably having too good an opinion of human nature."³ He feared that individuals would make bad use of the liberty that it granted them. In fact, his reservations may well be understood; they were theoretically just, but they have not been practically justified.

The truth is that the Americans have marvellously found the way to make use of the—perhaps only moderately good—instrument which they had made. "The imperfections of the tool are the genius of the worker."⁴ And the worker was incomparable. Mr. Wilson

¹ *Les États-Unis et la France*. Address of Mr Hill, p. 217.

² J. Fabre, *Washington*, p. 271.

³ *Ib.*, p. 268.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 268.

quotes the conclusion reached by an Englishman: "To show that the American Constitution had worked well was no proof that it is an excellent constitution, because Americans 'could work any constitution.'"¹ As to the mechanism in itself, and the wheel-work that keeps in motion the machinery of the State, there may be much to say in disparagement. But for such a people these are secondary points, negligible details. What they have been able to discern and to retain in the charter which they made for themselves is the spirit of legality and morality which inspires it.

This idea of law is so deeply imprinted upon the heart of the American that we find it even at the basis of his Revolution. It was quite the opposite of a revolt, it was the resolute and well-considered protest of conscience. He was not moved to it by a vague desire for better conditions, or by impatience of external authority, but above all by the need of that inward moral authority, emanating from reason, which alone gives to life a solid basis, by the full possession of itself. "It was not urged on by disorderly passions, but went forward with a love of order and legality."² The Americans felt in

¹ Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*.

² Woodrow Wilson, *The New Freedom*, p. 234.

1776 with regard to their oppressor what they felt in 1917 before the German menace, that the sole means of being free and happy is to be just.

General Washington had, at that time, as clear a consciousness of this as Professor Wilson to-day. For Washington the republic will be moral or it will not be: "Our politics must have for its basis the purest principles of private morality, and the same virtues which commend the good man to the esteem of his fellows must commend our republic to the esteem of the world. If there is any firmly established truth, it is the indissoluble tie between virtue and happiness, between the maxims of a just government and the solid rewards of public prosperity."¹ "It is true, in the strictest sense of the word, that virtue and morals are the moving spring of a popular government."² And in his Farewell Address and political testament his last thought was the supreme affirmation of justice. "The path of duty is open before us; each step will show us that virtue is the best and the only true politics. . . . *Let us, therefore, as a nation, be just.*"³

All who have followed after him, thinkers or statesmen, have spoken in the same terms.

¹ J. Fabre, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

² *Ib.*, p. 325.

³ *Ib.*, p. 262.

Fiat justitia is the watchword which, inscribed in the Constitution, rules the development of American politics. Politics must be nursed upon the knees of morality. It was Emerson who said: "The object of all political struggle is to make morality the basis of legislation. . . . Morality is the basis of government."¹ Mr. Roosevelt preaches at the same time "the gospel of efficiency," and "the gospel of morality."² President Wilson, before plunging his country into the war that is to bring justice to the world, insists upon "a free and a just government."³ All of them make the thought of Franklin their own: "Honesty is the best policy."

Upon this point the leading minds of the United States have shown themselves immovable. Born of justice, they have always sought to guide their nation in the ways of justice. If they had held less high and firm the standard of Right, that rallying-point for the various portions of the Confederation, the latter would have been crushed and broken. It could not have survived its terrible crises, because these, over and above the interests at stake, were for it crises of conscience. The struggle against for-

¹ Emerson, *Essays*.

² Roosevelt, *American Ideals*, p. 35.

³ Wilson, *The New Freedom*, p. 218.

eign oppression, against human slavery, and now against the menace of world-subjugation, have been so many manifestations of the spirit of justice which, after having permitted them to define and to realize their national ideal, have at last led them to conceive and to affirm their international ideal.

There is, therefore, *an America*, and not *some United States*. There is *an America* because a country is something to will and to make in common, and this something exists. All Americans insist upon "the indestructibility of the Union."¹ All conceive of their country as "an indissoluble Union of indestructible States."² Above all individual and local interests appears "the spirit of the Union,"³ without which this "great whole" would never have been made.⁴

This spirit is not narrowly mercantile, but broadly human. It is without doubt an aspiration after happiness, but happiness is not conceived as accessible by petty or indirect means. It can be reached only by the highroad, and this road must be open to all. To assure to each one the conditions of free development a country is necessary, a "great country." Now,

¹ Bryce, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

² J. Fabre, *op. cit.*, p. 260.

³ *Ib.*

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 163.

it is the law alone which guarantees freedom. "In our day the law must come to the assistance of the individual. It must come to his assistance to see that he gets fair play. That is all, but it is much." ¹

We see that this liberty must be a *just* liberty. It refuses privileges or advantages gained at the expense of any one's independence. It lifts itself up against all aggressive or violent tendencies in men, classes, or peoples. It confers upon each the right to bring before the judge every iniquity of which he believes himself to be the victim. It imposes upon the judge the duty of pronouncing always according to equity, even though, so to do, he be obliged to pass beyond the will of the legislator and appeal to the Constitution. America was to be that *justice* might be

Liberty and justice: these are what represent America to the citizen of the United States, a whole liberty, a whole justice for himself and for all, in a word, for man. We see in what sense America is a nation of individuals. It is a nation in order that the *individual* may be, that the "rights of man" may cease to be a theoretic affirmation and become a power, the *power of man* realizing, in a political order, at

¹ Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

once most flexible and most legal, all that it can be. "Our part is to promote *to their farthest limits* the ends of liberty and justice." ¹

¹ Emerson, *Essays*.

CHAPTER IV

THE INTERNATIONAL IDEAL

I

AMERICAN INTERNATIONALISM

America an inter-nation.—Contrast between the *disunited* states of Europe and the *United* States of America.—Rejection of the system of *alliances* and the politics of conquest.—The Monroe Doctrine and American isolation.—The Americanization of the United States.—Tendency toward the conception and accomplishment of *international duty*.

“**O**UR part is to promote to their farthest limits the ends of liberty and justice.”

But to hold to the realization of national aims would be to stop half way; fully to accomplish the task one must work for the aims of humanity. This is what the American, impelled by the logic of his morals, ought to have done, and this is what he has done.

More than any others, his people were called into being to understand and practise what one of them has called “its international duty.”¹ Is she not herself an Inter-nation?

¹ Royce, *The Duty of Americans in the Present War*, p. 3.

Not only, nor especially, because in her blood is mingled the blood of many races, but also, and principally, because she is a union or association of States, each one of which preserves its autonomy. It was therefore enough for her to extend to all civilization the conception which she has of herself, in order for her to feel her obligations to the whole world.

No doubt we shall find in Europe, and notably in England and France, the elements of such a conception, but in those countries its character is at once theoretical and timid, while the Americans have boldly entered upon the road of realization. In our relations of nation with nation, we have in practice only alliances between equals, and certain countries even lay claim to the right of subordinating inferior nations to those that are superior, or who pride themselves upon being such. In short, we have either a balance of powers or power imposing itself upon weakness, but never relations of right in the international domain.

An *alliance* is not a *union*. It expresses itself by agreements—which in themselves are precarious and reversible—between personalities who remain independent and do not even admit of a relation of mutual interdependence between them. Each develops by itself, ac-

according to its own laws, no common organ binding together their distinct governments. The alliance is limited to a certain number of determined points; it functions only in cases provided for (generally an eventual war) and pursues only definite objects. Furthermore, each one practises what has been more or less happily called "righteous self-interest," and refuses a close and, above all, a permanent collaboration with his allies. If the anticipated eventuality arises, the alliance works; when that ceases, it no longer functions, for its object is not to associate destinies but to co-ordinate efforts. And even while it functioned there was always the difficulty of constituting a connecting organism. We see this only too clearly in the present war—so much does each of the members dread to find one of his partners claiming supremacy.

The word alliance in itself implies *disunited* states seeking to come to an understanding through compromises. It presupposes either war or a state of war; it is always directed *against* other nations who are dreaded or whom it threatens. It never has a directly pacific purpose. If, as may happen, it is made for the purpose of maintaining peace, it is always because there is somewhere else a people or a group of peoples who propose to disturb the

peace. The system of alliances, the only system hitherto known and practised by European diplomacy, recognizes by its very existence the state of war as the normal condition of peoples. It is, therefore, from the international point of view, at best a palliative and, more often perhaps, a danger. "Triple alliance" against "triple entente" brings about first the necessity of armed peace, and then war let loose.

The United States, fundamentally pacific, have always refused to enter upon any system of alliances whatever. This has been their unvarying policy with regard to Europe, and even to-day the very special place that they occupy in what may be called the great confederation of Right makes them rather an infinitely precious auxiliary than an ally, properly so called. They did not sign the Agreement of London, and the end that they pursue, the peace of the world organized upon a legal basis, would *ipso facto* result in the suppression of all alliances and the establishment of a union in their place.

They do not desire a balance of Powers, because they desire that there shall be no Powers in the particular sense of the word as here employed, no permanent military forces always on a war footing, ever ready for aggression. The

policy of equilibrium is the policy of the see-saw; its necessary, inevitable outcome is a fall into "hideous war."

Where there is no alliance there is something worse, namely domination, open or concealed. It is concealed where a strong nation, by the very fact of its strength and its efficient manifestation of authority, drags in its wake a weak nation whose independence is henceforth purely nominal. This policy Germany has always proposed to follow in the case of small states. One among them, unusually small, Luxembourg, had only a semblance of life, and was the object of a disguised annexation by means of Germany's railroads. Before the war she attempted to subject Switzerland, Holland, and Belgium to a less evident but at times sufficiently efficacious pressure, notably in the vote at the Gotthard Convention, which was her work. The attitude of King Constantine has shown that Greece was little more than a German colony. The Austro-Hungarian Empire, enormous as it was, had long before 1914 ceased to belong to itself, and the Turkey of Enver Pasha had not for a long time had any other government than that at Berlin. In fact, the persevering effort toward the constituting of *Mittel-Europa* (a delicate

euphemism for Pan-Germania) is only the systematic extension of the same principle.

Sometimes the rougher method of annexation, pure and simple, is adopted. Too often it takes place at the expense of civilized peoples. This is seen in the domination of Germany over Poland and Als ce, that of Austria over Bohemia and the *irredentist* regions, and how many others! But notwithstanding far too numerous and painful examples, this is nevertheless the exception; the oppressed nation finally succeeds, as did Switzerland long ago and Greece more recently, in regaining its independence. Contrariwise, with regard to uncivilized peoples, the exception becomes the rule: total seizure is effected under the form of colonization or, at best, of protectorate.

Yet even here, we find, are degrees of domination. Even when it does not go as far as the abominable treatment to which the Germans have subjected the natives of the Congo, it is at times very harsh, the conquered populations being deprived of the right of self-administration. This is generally the case with African colonies; it is also that of British India. At times, on the contrary, especially where European civilization has largely penetrated, and when the whites are in the majority, or at least in force,

a more flexible and generally happier method is adopted, that self-government which England has so marvellously applied to her divers dominions. They enjoy an autonomy of fact, if not of right. But none the less remains the domination, however restrained, of the parent state over the colonies; the latter never stand upon the same level as herself. The Council of the Empire, instituted by Mr. Lloyd George, tends toward, without fully effecting, union. It is in fact an *Empire*, not a *Republic*, which England has constituted throughout the world. Its elements are half co-ordinate, half subordinate; they do not form a voluntary and concurrent group.

There is, then, no European internationalism nor European patriotism, because there is no Europe. Europe has a geographical unity without having a political unity; she is a continent, or a large fraction of a continent, she is not a country. There is an America, one geographically and in a large degree politically. There is, therefore, an American internationalism and an American patriotism. There is that strange and to us paradoxical thing, an *international patriotism*, subordinating to itself, without suppressing, the various national patriotisms.

Europe is multiple without being one; she is divided. America is at the same time one and multiple; she is united. The patriotism of the United States is beyond its cause. It declares itself with fervor, with pride, and, where Europe is concerned, with a shade of contempt. A citizen of America has no right to look back to his origin; from the moment when he sets foot upon the soil of the United States he should no longer know that he was ever Russian or German, French, English, or Italian. He is there "to do the work there of an American,"¹ and to assimilate himself thoroughly with his new country. This country is incomparable, "the greatest in the world," that to which the world looks for its destiny. "Our nation is that one among all the nations of the earth which holds in its hands the fate of the coming years."² The citizen of the Union should not turn too curious a gaze, nor one too full of desire, toward the Old World; he should not seek to Europeanize himself, to count among "the weaklings who seek to be other than Americans."³ Mr. Wilson, less dithyrambic than Mr. Roosevelt, is not less firm in his restrained ardor. He praises "the original Americanism, . . . faith in the ability of a con-

¹ Roosevelt, *American Ideals*, p. 23.² *Ib.*, p. 18.³ *Ib.*, p. 22.

fidant, resourceful, and independent people.”¹ He proclaims that “the vigor of America pulses in the blood of every true American.”² To such a country all ambitions are lawful, and the future opens before it an illimitable prospect. It will be impossible to be more strongly, more intensely, and at the same time more artlessly patriotic than they are in the United States.

But at the same time the American has an international soul. This is because his country is itself a world, not only nor essentially because of its extent, its physical greatness, the range of its climate, or the diversity of its productions, for from all these points of view Russia is its equal or its superior. No, it is a world by its organization, because this country is a synthesis of many countries. It joins without absorbing them, it multiplies the force that inheres in each by the powers of all the others, while maintaining their special physiognomy. Each State is an individual *sui generis*, entirely free, bound to the other States by relations of right, not of fact. America springs from them, they do not arise from her. Thus there is no American colonization, no American sphere of influence, no American hegemony, no guardian-

¹ Wilson, *The New Freedom*, p. 56.

² Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

ship of strong over weak, no relation of master and servant, or protector and protected. All free, all equal, all united in the one thought of maintaining and, if possible, of increasing this liberty and equality. America has been able to realize what Washington called "the harmony of nations,"¹ and by this harmony to cause to spring to life a new, vernal, original nation, made of all the others, and without suppressing them, including them all in its sphere of influence.

Therefore it was logical that at a given moment of its development America should in some sort take the lead in forming a league for the constitution of a world nation. Not by the way of conquest and annexation, which would be the very negation of its principles and a sort of moral suicide shortly preceding its natural disintegration, but by a sort of generalization of the method to which it owed its existence. To form a "Society of Nations," let there be no mistake, is to form all society into one immense nation, in which each would find its place and keep its independence, while combining in a harmonious whole, like that of which the United States afford a model.

Of this conception the founders of America had from the beginning a clear vision. Wash-

¹ J. Fabre, *Washington*, p. 185.

ington already dreamed of the United States of Europe. But they were too practical to stop at dreams, or to forestall the time. That was a future stage, and it was theirs to accomplish the present stage—to make America to-day in order that America might to-morrow make the world. They constituted a national type in contrast with the European type, a union and internation over against disunion and opposing countries. They must needs, therefore, detach themselves from Europe and systematically ignore Europe, shut themselves up in their “splendid,” or, rather, their colossal, “isolation.” Thus Washington practised the prudent policy of “Every one in his own place,” and consequently of “Every one for himself.” He hailed the French Revolution with joy, somewhat mingled with solicitude, but he was careful not to offer to it any sort of support, or an equivalent for that which Lafayette had brought to his country. “I have always thought that no nation should meddle with the internal affairs of another nation.”¹ If it was well to maintain and develop the system of exchange with the Old World, at least agreements should not go beyond the narrow sphere of commercial interests. Keep every promise, but make the fewest

¹ J. Fabre, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

possible promises, was the principle. "Meet your obligations to the letter, but it is my opinion that you should not multiply them."¹ Hence the Monroe Doctrine was not slow to establish the principle that since European affairs did not concern America, Europe, by reciprocity, should refrain from concerning herself with those of America.

Do we find here a refusal to enter upon the international problem? No, in the sense that the Americans had solved it at home and for themselves. Yes, in this other sense that it was not yet posited in terms that permitted its successful treatment. There were two worlds, separated for the time by an abyss that it was impossible to bridge, and would have been untimely to try to bridge. Their interest was to live on good terms, and the best thing for this was for neither to be too curious about the other. Here, again, interest coincides with justice, as always is the case in America. My "interest" is to remain in my home, as your interest is to remain in yours; "justice" demands that neither of us shall cause the other any trouble, that there shall be on neither part any encroachment upon our respective liberties. It is for each people, as for each individual, to

¹ *Ib.*, p. 333.

regulate his destiny by himself and as he understands the case.

But the day comes when, in the nature of things, interest and justice, which had agreed upon separation, agree to work toward mutual approach. The policy of isolation is attractive, but, especially between great nations, factitious. In fact, they cannot isolate themselves. The development of exchanges, the invasion of foreign products, the influx of Asiatic immigrants, the unmeasured ambition of Pan-Germanism, all conspired to bring into the foreground the question which had been provisionally set aside. It was necessary to take a position with regard to foreign nations, that the United States should adopt a foreign policy. What policy?

It might, strictly speaking, be an aggressive, offensive policy, such as that to which Mr. Roosevelt at times seemed to incline; and there are, in fact, existing germs of American imperialism. The war with Spain was not popular for simple reasons of humanity, and by touching certain chords it would be not impossible to excite to a greater or less degree chauvinistic passions. But it would surely have been a flash in the pan. Before America could become truly militaristic it would have been necessary to create a new spirit, transform the soul of the

race, lead into new paths, upon which they would be loth to enter, those energies and that spirit of adventure which until then had been occupied in peaceful and productive works. It would be necessary to break with American tradition, with the spirit of the Constitution, with the very organization of the country. Such a thing is not impossible, especially in this nation, so ardent, so mobile, to whom the attraction of the new is so great, in which the love of invention and of risk combine to fascinate the mind. But it is improbable, and the event has proved that it was not to be.

Thanks to President Wilson, the American and not the European solution prevailed, the legal and idealistic solution. The United States resolutely chose for peace, for international peace, for the peace of the world. But this peace must be made actual, and it was to this end that they entered the war. They had never been more profoundly pacific than on the day when they declared war. But to attain their object they must do double duty—one immediate, the military effort that would contribute to reduce to impotence “the enemy of humanity”;¹ the other ulterior and decisive, properly constituting an international effort,

¹ President Wilson’s Message to Congress, April 2, 1917.

which would consist in organizing the world upon the type of the United States, enlarging the American republic into a universal republic.

II

THE ARMY AND WAR

American pacificism.—Non-existence of a standing army.—The American militia.—“Volunteers of Liberty.”—Their military and their civil values.—The American army an *army of individuals*.—War and peace.—War is cowardly, peace is courageous.—Refusal of wars of conquest.—All American wars have been wars of independence.

America entered the war with stern resolution. She had not made her decision without a struggle, not merely in opposing a strongly organized German party, lavishly paid by Germany, but in doing violence to her own prepossessions, and to those that were most legitimate, those of Puritans profoundly and soundly pacific whose religious and moral principles opposed every armed conflict, every appeal to force. Even in the President, most of all in him, the man of law and legality if ever there was one, the conflict of conscience was long and painful. But from the day when the decision was made it was irrevocable. America is making war with all her soul and with all her powers; she is fighting, though she has a horror of militarism, and because she has a horror of it. She is fight-

ing to destroy militarism in time and in space, always and everywhere.

All the evidence goes to prove that she did not will war, nor *this* war. In the first place, her entrance into the great conflict, though long foreseen, found her entirely disarmed.

America has never consented to form a standing army. On each occasion when under the compelling power of facts she has been forced to overcome her repugnance and appeal to the fortunes of arms, she has addressed herself directly to the country. As soon as the danger was put down she has dismissed her troops. There is with her no rivalry between the civil and the military power, for the second is simply the first acquitting itself of exceptional functions. There is no fear of a *pronunciamento*; her first and greatest general was the most loyal of her citizens, and he gave the tone to all the others. "Never shall I be wanting in the higher duty which I have to perform to my country. Never shall I violate the respect due to the civil authority. . . . Never shall I forget that the sword is not to be drawn until the last moment, to defend public liberties, and that it is to be returned to the scabbard at the first moment when those liberties are safe." ¹

¹ J. Fabre, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

In adopting this attitude of systematic disarmament the United States took full account of their privileged position. They had no fear of danger from without. On the north their neighbor is Canada, the most pacific and the most civilized colony of the nation that most abhors war. On the south lies Mexico, where the hotter Spanish blood contains elements of possible insurrection; but the country is weak, thinly peopled, divided against itself; a police force is sufficient to keep the Mexican bands in order, an army would be useless. The need of a better organized defense began to be felt only on the day when the hand of a foreign power, scattering gold and weapons, sought to turn that country against its powerful neighbor; up to that time it could pass for a practically negligible quantity. Danger, if danger there was, would be found, rather, beyond the sea, in the Japan of to-day or the China of to-morrow. At the worst it would merely require the creation of a navy, not of an army. And though she has created the former, America has always pursued with regard to these powers a policy of harmony. The United States have no need of a military force.

More than all, they have no desire for one. A nation of working men cannot be a nation

of soldiers. The working man needs life for work, not for conquests. Let a time of danger come, he will exchange his tool for a gun, but simply that he may ward off the aggressor and return the more quickly to his work. He is suspicious of a pretorian guard which, under color of defending his liberties, might very well some day confiscate them. No sword, were it that of M. Prudhomme, made to protect institutions, and in case of need to oppose them. If at times a wave of chauvinism overspreads the country, one may be sure that it has no depth, and will spend itself in foam. Mr. Roosevelt's popularity, even in the most critical hours, was unable to overcome this invincible distrust. His thorough defeat when he presented himself as candidate for the presidency of the republic had no other cause. In vain did he exclaim, "Peace is a goddess only when she comes with sword girt on thigh";¹ he was not able to induce his fellow citizens to form an army after the type of those of Europe.

The American army, then, will be only a militia. But let no one deceive himself; a militia thus motivated can beat, and has beaten, the strongest regular armies. They proved it in the War of Independence. The "shirtless"

¹ Roosevelt, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

of 1778, like our *sansculottes* of the Year II, the "barefoot and coatless"¹ soldiers, under the most unfavorable conditions, worsted the thoroughly equipped English troops, who were abundantly provided with everything.

It was because the soldiers of the American Revolution, like our own, were fighting for their own cause:

"La liberté sublime emplissait leurs pensées."

When the English Government spoke slightly of them, the more enlightened Lord Chat-ham did them justice before his peers: "Our ministers affect to have no fear of inexperienced militia; I am afraid of any free militia." Liberty is the chief strength of democratic armies, for they recognize no discipline but that of liberty. And Washington, while fully admitting the difficulties of his enterprise, had no doubt of his militia: "The militia of this country should be looked upon as the palladium of our safety, and the first guaranty in case of hostility."²

The militia are citizen soldiers, those whom Congress called "The Volunteers of Freedom." Appearances were against them, and they still

¹ J. Fabre, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

² *Ib.*, p. 264.

are. De Rousiers, visiting them, remarked their uncovered throats, the negligence of their appearance, their defective evolutions, their absence of unity, in short, all the outward appearance of anarchy. Yes, but with all the inward marks of true valor, founded on the autonomy of the fighter. "The man taken individually is superior to the soldier that we know in France."¹ The praise is not small if we consider that the French soldier is, of all the soldiers of Europe, the most individualized, he whose worth as a man is, by common consent, the most strongly developed.

The American army, like the people from whom it proceeds, is the product of liberty. The qualities that it will soon show on our battle-fields are diametrically opposed to those which characterize the German army. It is not a question of the shock of masses of which the units are merged and lost in the whole. Each one, on the contrary, manifests in the field his powers of initiative and of decision. As everywhere in America, unity comes from within, from below, not from without and above. Order spontaneously creates itself, parties organize themselves of their own accord as a whole, by virtue of their self-government. An army

¹ De Rousiers, *op. cit.*, p. 605.

of individuals normally responds to this nation of individuals. Each one knows why he is fighting, and that he is fighting *for* himself, and thus he fights *by* himself.

But being conscious of his personality, he demands that it be respected. Thus we find in him an American trait that has already been more than once noted: he furnishes work, he proposes to be paid its just price. Not that we have here to do with an army of mercenaries living only for their wages; it is exactly the opposite. The American soldier is aware of what he ought to do, but he is also aware of what is due to him. It is always the sense of justice coinciding with that of interest: service for service, give and take. I give my life to secure the safety and the labor of my people; the labor of my people, fully secured, ought largely to better my condition. "Only good pay will induce the soldiers to remain with the colors,"¹ said Washington. "Patriotism must be reinforced by some hope of recompense."² Recompense is, however, not the word. To him who does not count the cost of life, the cost of his wage should not be counted. It is an enlargement of the British conception. The shilling of the English and the dollar of the American

¹ J. Fabre, *op. cit.*, p 228.

² *Ib*, p. 231.

soldier proceed from the same fundamental concern for justice.

Such an army can be asked to fight only for a just cause. The American has no fear of war, in a sense he should love it, for he is a fighter through and through, but it shocks at once his practical sense and his conception of morality; he deems it absurd, and he holds in horror the unavowable reasons which generally determine it, and the barbarism which it manifests. He can see a better use for courage and energy than that which consists in mutual extermination.

In his eyes war once had its reasons for being, and its virtues; it has them no longer. It is necessary to young and ignorant peoples, first as a means of procuring resources, and then because it virilizes them, forms their minds, their hearts, their consciences. "It is a temporary and preparatory state and does actively forward the culture of man."¹ It is the primitive and rudimentary expression of a very sound and profoundly American principle: "Help yourself; don't look to another for help." The principle to-day simply finds other modes of application, higher and more fruitful. Our energies have

¹ Emerson, *Miscellanies: War*.

found another field, and give their best results in works of peace.

For to the American peace is nothing less than soft and anæmic. It consists in the exercise of powers and not in a display of pleasures. Pittsburgh and Philadelphia are not Suburrha or Capua. Peace should be the work of the strong; peace is the war of man against the forces of nature, not the war of man against man. It is invention, not destructive daring. It is not the heroic effort of a strenuous and exceptional moment in which all the powers of life gather themselves together to conquer or die. It is continual, incessant, ever-recurring effort, the prolonged labor of the factory or the laboratory, the heroism of the "toilers," whom President Wilson eulogizes. "The cause of peace is not the cause of cowardice."¹

We might go even further. The cause of cowardice is the cause of war; not of those who wage it, but of those who let it loose and cause others to wage it. In their eyes war is a brief and violent effort, the effort of a moment, which is expected to exempt the victor from all future trouble. War is indolence, the desire to live at the expense of others, to take possession of and enjoy wealth acquired by others, in-

stead of creating new wealth by his daily toil. It is an attempt to reduce the world to slavery, to force vanquished peoples to play the part of the galley-slave, who, under the threat of the lash, or before the open throat of cannon, sweat blood and water to make the wealth of their oppressors. Let us not forget that Germany, when letting loose this cataclysm upon the world, anticipated a rapid and decisive campaign of a few weeks or, at most, a few months, and that she induced her men to march by the promise of a share in the booty, the *spolia opima* of the conquered. She set forth for "the fresh and joyful war," moved by the desire of an easy and an idle life. The United States, with their love of activity and a rugged life, can have only thorough contempt for so degrading a conception.

In principle, therefore, America recoils from war. But in fact, when she sees in it the *sine qua non* of peace, she throws herself into it body and soul. She can fight when it is necessary. And when is it necessary? When liberty is at stake—her own liberty or that of the world. She refuses wars of conquest; with all her power she upholds wars of liberation.

She refuses wars of conquest. Conquest is

imbecile and vain. Wills cannot be annexed. "In no case do we desire territorial possessions which do not directly form one body with our national domain, and we nowhere desire a domain acquired by criminal aggression."¹ In fact, America has never sought extension except as a result of covenanted agreements. A man becomes an American by his free will and choice; he does not become one by constraint.

But America upholds wars of liberation. Every war which she has undertaken has been in her mind a war of independence, even those which a European would be inclined to look upon with a different eye. The American "is not a hypocrite when he maintains that he went to Cuba in the interest of the Cubans, or occupied Panama as the 'attorney of humanity.'"²

In any case, even if one may argue the correctness of this character with regard to an expedition like that to the Philippines, it is evidently clear when one contemplates the three "great wars" undertaken by the young republic: the War of Independence, the War of Secession, and lastly, its present participation in the World War.

¹ President Harrison, quoted in *Les États-Unis et la France*. Address by Morton Fullerton, p. 195.

² *Ib.*, p. 188.

The war against England was the uprising of the national conscience, the protest of Right against Might. America was constrained to fight; she accepted but did not provoke war. She had but one aim in view: to enfranchise herself, not to dominate. "Compelled to take up arms, *we are dreaming neither of glory nor conquest*, but we will defend, even to death, our possessions and our liberties, inherited from our fathers."¹ Notwithstanding appearances, the United States did not declare war. They endured it, for the oppression of one people by another constitutes a state of war, a permanent war. The English did not deceive themselves in the matter. Fox and his friends called the American cause "the cause of liberty."² At the head of the movement whom do we find? Generals? No, lawyers. "The revolutionary tocsin was sounded by lawyers."³ The head of the army was before the war a surveyor and a wealthy landed proprietor. A new Cincinnatus, his dreams were all of returning to till his fields; he was the most fervent advocate of peace and disarmament. In his farewell address to his army he gave "his most affectionate greetings to the brave men who have assured

¹ J. Fabre, *op. cit.*, p. 16.² J. Fabre, *op. cit.*, p. 16.³ Lavissee et Rambaud, *Histoire générale*, VII, 536.

to their fellow citizens the enjoyment of the most precious blessings, liberty and *peace*.”¹ In its motives, its spirit, its results, the War of Independence was eminently a war of peace.

Not less so was the War of Secession. We have not space here to discuss the very powerful economic interests that divided the liberal North from the slaveholding South, but we must not lose sight of the guiding thread of all American politics, that is to say, that *it always finds its true interest on the side of justice*, never on the side of violence. When we analyze the concept of justice we find it is in fact nothing other than a reconciliation, and consequently an inclusion of legitimate interests. It wills liberty for all and not for the few. It would have been unthinkable that an America enfranchised from foreign domination should permit and perpetuate at home a system of internal domination. She owed it to herself to uproot the last vestiges of oppression from her soil. “No more slave States and no more slave territory,” was the watchword. If the States desired to be upon a footing of equality in their mutual relations, it was first of all necessary that there should be no caste among them, no

¹ J. Fabre, *op. cit.*

subjects, but simply citizens enjoying the same rights. The maintenance of slavery upon any part of her territory would have brought about the dissolution of the Union: *secession*. This idea was expressed by Hale when offering himself as candidate for the presidency: "Slavery is sectional, liberty is national; the general government should separate itself from slavery and exercise its constitutional influence on the side of liberty." Either America is a democracy or there is no America.

Now, it is precisely in the same terms that the question, enlarged but identical, is to-day possible for her and for the world. Germany does not fear America strong, but America free. She would perfectly well have come to terms with an American autocracy, with an American czarism, if the expression were not a contradiction in terms. She would easily have concluded a holy alliance, or, if you please, a cartel, a sharing of world-domination with an empire overseas. She would thus have carried out her vast plan of universal subjugation. But she could not, without disowning herself, tolerate a great centre of independence on the other side of the Atlantic. If she had carried out her plan of European hegemony, we should soon have witnessed a formidable clash between

two continents, the Old Continent a serfdom, the New Continent free.

America warded off the blow by anticipating it. It was she who could not tolerate the constitution of a predatory empire making all Europe and at least a part of Asia the soldier of the Kaiser. Therefore she must lead Germany to liberty in spite of herself as she had led the Southern States thither during the War of Secession. For this is indubitably her aim: to save the world from tyranny by enfranchising the tyrant himself.

She remained, then, faithful to her origin, to her past as liberator, to her ideal of peace through right, when she went into the war "up to her ears." We must say more: on the day when she took her place beside the Allied Powers she gave to the present war its true character as a democratic war, cleansed of every disturbing element, every secret mental reservation of territorial expansion. And by this fact the United States dominates the present conflict. It represents the only Power that can be at the same time judge and client, and remain the arbiter even in the form of a combatant.

III

UNIVERSAL PEACE AND THE "SOCIETY OF NATIONS"

The nations considered as *moral persons*.—Autocracies and democracies.—The German Empire and its allies "enemies of humanity."—Intervention of America in the World War.—She represents "the future of humanity."—Emerson's "Declaration of Human Duties."—President Wilson's policy.—1. The installation of Right—Peace "without annexations and indemnities," but with "readjustments" and "reparations."—2. The "Society of Nations."—International justice and world union.—The United States and "international duty."—The world made free.—The American ideal and the French ideal.

In what then consists the active internationalism of the United States? In extending to relations between nations the legal principles that regulate relations between individuals. Public international law should be faithfully modelled upon private national law.

What says this latter? It sets out from a fact the existence of human *individuals*, and it duplicates it with a law, that of human *persons*. The person has a twofold existence: natural and legal. If he had only the first he would be reduced to the condition of a *thing*, might, like other creations of nature, be the object of aggression and appropriation by the strong. The law invests him with an ideal power which shelters him from the encroachments of force.

Now that which is true of human individuals is not yet true of human groups. They have the precarious existence of fact, they have not the uncontested legal personality which guarantees them against usurpation. There is a morality for men; there is none for peoples.

Now it is necessary that there should be such a morality, and America insists that the legal personality of nations be recognized and guaranteed. "America affirms before all else the rights of individuals *and the rights of existing states.*"¹

Whence comes it that, in fact, this right is denied? From this: that too many nations do not yet belong to themselves. How shall they mutually respect one another when they cannot personally respect even themselves? The sole, but formidable, obstacle to the "Society of Nations" is the persistence of autocracies. Between democracies, free persons, agreement is natural and necessary. Between rival autocracies it is difficult. Between autocracies and democracies it is impossible. This will kill that or that will exterminate this. One of the two forms must necessarily succumb to the other.

There is, therefore, only one remedy for war:

¹ *Les États-Unis et la France.* Boutroux Address, p. 12.

uproot the autocracies. It is absurd to claim that war must be eternal; it will disappear when its cause is made to disappear. The cause is known, brought into the light; it is absolutism, the *sic volo, sic jubeo, sit pro ratione voluntas*. It is the domination of a man over a people which leads to the domination of one people over another. Then let us put down the man, that we may "eliminate this element of arbitrary force and compulsion, and replace it by law, equal for all." ¹

Let us study the map of the world and define the respective situations of the peoples before us. They are naturally divided into two groups: those that do not belong to themselves, and those who belong to themselves, or tend to do so. Their respective functions are clear, resulting from their nature; the first will tend to dominate and hold in servitude the second; the second to liberate the first by enfranchising themselves. There can be no other politics. The first duty for the world is to beat the German army, to conquer that Prussia which is an army and not a nation. But it is still more important so to act that there shall no longer be a nation transformed into an army, or suppressed to give place to an army. "We have

¹ *Ib.*, p. 204. Address by Mr. David Jayne Hill.

no quarrel with the German people,"¹ the German people are their own enemy.

Let us consider the first group. It represents the enemy of the right, the enemy of democracies, "the enemy of humanity." In the person of the Kaiser, Germany marvellously symbolizes it, but in varying degrees all the other Powers allied with Germany offer the same character. Autocratic and dynastic is the Austria of the Hapsburgs; autocratic and dynastic the Bulgaria of "Czar" Ferdinand; autocratic and dynastic the Turkey of Enver Pasha. These nations of necessity form a block. And if czarist Russia, with its Sturmers and its Protopapoffs, who betray their allies, did not enter this Holy Alliance of Kings against peoples, it is because in its inner essence, as President Wilson has well shown, the true Russia, the deeper Russia, was democratic. The sudden and definitive collapse of czarism, which not one party arose to defend, not one voice upholds, proves to what a point the power of this colossus with feet of clay was at once formidable and precarious.

The world struggle is, therefore, concentrated upon the group, united at once geographically and politically, of the central Powers of *Mittel-*

¹ President Wilson, Message to Congress, April 2, 1917.

Europa, encircled on all sides by the democracies that surround it. It can remain what it is only by oppression first, and then by the total eviction and suppression of the free peoples. We have seen that its policy in Serbia, in Armenia, is a policy of extermination; the systematic butchering of the population, or at the very least the creation of such conditions of existence that they are reduced to death by famine, or to a physiological exhaustion so profound that it menaces the race through the individual. With hardly more hypocrisy, this is the method applied by Germany to the invaded regions of Belgium and France, and by the method of wholesale deportations the guillotine pines for the deported. Kill or reduce to servitude, kill in order to reduce to servitude, this is the programme whose realization she pursues coldly and methodically. Her object is *the total subjection of humanity*. Not less reasonably the contrary formula should be, and has been, that of America: what she pursues is *the integral realization of humanity*. Stripped of its military, diplomatic, political, and social details, which are only its visible incidents, the present struggle reveals, therefore, this startlingly tragic character: *Shall there be a humanity, or shall humanity disappear from the world?*

It will be the imperishable honor of the United States that even before taking action she understood, and she willed. Farther removed from the scene of carnage, less directly affected by events, this great nation did not immediately grasp the meaning of the conflict. It held it a point of honor to be neutral; but the day came when it understood that neutrality in the face of crime is dishonoring, dangerous, and impossible. First it protested, and protested in the name of the Right and of humanity. For a time Germany appeared to hesitate, to draw back; she suspended her operations of submarine warfare. The United States waited and hoped. For a moment they thought that peace was possible, a just peace, respectful of law, and they asked the belligerents to state precisely their objects in this war. The democracies replied; the autocracies kept silence. Finally Tartuffe threw off the mask. Feeling himself to be lost if he did not go to the uttermost extent of crime, he resumed and multiplied his submarine activity. At this moment, attacked in her interests and in her rights, menaced as a nation and as a human person, America, by the voice of her President, took sides and pronounced her verdict, condemning, not Germany, but German autocracy.

She said: The world shall be, and shall be to the full. All nations have the right to existence, the small as well as the great, those which are no more or those which are not yet, as well as those now existing. There shall be a Belgium, there shall be a Serbia, there shall be a Poland. There shall even be a Germany, where there no longer is one. But there can only be a Germany and a world on the day when there is no longer a German Emperor.

Let no one object that in acting thus America acts contrary to her traditional policy, to the policy of Washington, of Monroe, that she meddles unduly in the affairs of other peoples. She will reply: Where there is despotism there is not a people. To do away with the despot is to call the people into existence; it is to permit other nations to live, by making a place for them in the concert of all the nations. The United States are working for Germany against herself.

But to be able thus to speak, and to carry affirmations to acts, one must enjoy a privileged position. One must be in the right, must have might at the service of the right, must be willing to set an example. America is all this. She is the living image of the Right, not of a platonic Right stated in declarations of prin-

ciples, but of the Right practically written into acts; she needs only to say to the fighting peoples: "Look at me!" She is Might placed, or capable of being placed, at the service of Right, virtual but inexhaustible Might, a hundred millions of men, of whom she may mobilize ten millions; the most formidably equipped industries in the world, a power of work and production dizzying to imagine. She dominates the belligerents because she is not directly interested in the struggle; that is to say, because she has no claims of any kind to push. What does she ask for? *Nothing!* She has no war aims; her aims are those of peace.

She stands then apart, and even when she intervenes she is truly "above the fray." Long ago, indeed, one may say at her very birth, she had a presentiment of the part which she would one day be called to play. Washington wrote to Lafayette that he considered himself a "citizen of the great republic of humanity,"¹ adding: "I see the human race a great family, united by fraternal bonds."² Elsewhere he wrote prophetically: "We have sown a seed of liberty and union that will gradually germinate throughout the earth. *Some day, on the model of the United States of America, will be consti-*

¹ J. Fabre, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

² *Ib.*, p. 185.

tuted the United States of Europe."¹ During her development the American nation has become more and more conscious of her world mission. Emerson saw in her a people marked out to preside at the universal enfranchisement: In some period one country represents more than others *the sentiments and the future of humanity*. There is no doubt that America occupies this place in the minds of the nations.² It belongs to her to be the legislator for all nationalities.³ And finally, announcing in advance the very aim of President Wilson's efforts, he said of the United States: They now proceed to the elaboration, not of the Declaration of Rights, but of the Declaration of human duties.⁴

The striking relief in which such statements stand out appears in the reading of President Wilson's messages and communications. With the firmness of their precise and cold legal accents, they are the perfect application of the ideas of Washington and Emerson, the concrete affirmation of their idealistic utterances.

Neutrality is the law between nations as it is, we must observe, between individuals; it expresses respect for the private wall of national life. But it cannot exist when there are no nations, when one is confronted with "auto-

¹ *Ib.*, p. 113.² Emerson, *Essays*.³ *Ib.*⁴ *Ib.*, p. 290.

cratic governments backed by organized force which is controlled wholly by their will, not by the will of their people.”¹ It is these governments, and they alone, that must be brought to trial. “We are at the beginning of an age in which it will be insisted that the same standards of conduct and of responsibility for wrong done shall be observed among nations and their governments that are observed among the individual citizens of civilized states.”² If they are dangerous they must be reduced to impotence; that is to say, in the case under consideration, put down; if they are guilty they must be tried and condemned, not only by the purely moral verdict of the universal conscience, but with the just rigor of the law. It is a question of precise, positive consent to crimes of common law, committed against the human race “in the interest of a dynasty and a little group of ambitious men.”³ The penalties are provided by the codes; they must be applied. Dynasties will be overturned, criminal ambitions punished, and it will be just.

In his recent reply to the appeal of the Vatican for a more or less limping peace, President Wilson defined the position of the United States

¹ President Wilson, Message to Congress, April 2, 1917.

² *Ib.*

³ *Ib.*

more clearly and strongly than ever. After having stigmatized the crimes of "the enemy of four-fifths of the world,"¹ he declared without mincing matters that no peace is possible with "an irresponsible government, which, having secretly planned to dominate the world," had not shrunk from carrying its plans into effect without respecting treaties or principles, long venerated by civilized nations, of international law and honor.² It is a government without faith or law, a government of "scraps of paper," whose word and signature count for nothing, a government with regard to which the impartiality which men would fain keep is either lack of comprehension or complicity. One no longer treats with a Hohenzollern.

What a difference between these clear and cutting statements and the prudent, measured, equivocal formulas of the pontifical note! Reading the proposals of Benedict XV, one cannot prevent the secret suspicion that they conceal a snare laid before democracies by Austro-Germanic autocracy. Voluntarily or not, it would seem as if they were inspired by some unwavering desire to reconstruct the Holy Roman-Germanic Empire at the expense of free peoples. Their accent is rather political than religious.

¹ Reply of President Wilson to the Pope.

² *Ib.*

On the contrary, we hear an accent, if not purely religious, at least inspired by that Puritan morality so near a neighbor to the Christian religion, from the beginning to the end of Mr. Wilson's reply. These are not the words of a politician, safeguarding interests, negotiating a compromise; they are those of a judge pronouncing sentence. They show a true impartiality, that which pronounces against a felony, and not that which compounds with it. Not for the first time words have been uttered from the White House which the world expected to hear from the lips of the head of the Catholic Church. To the "reasons of the Holy Father," by far too exclusively *temporal*, the successor and worthy emulator of Washington has replied with the spiritual reasons of the righteous man.

America will then pursue the accomplishment of two duties: one, more immediate, the restoration of the violated order; the other, more distant, the organization of a legal international order, which will never again permit such crimes.

The first object should be clearly defined, without ambiguity and without passion, but also without weakness: "Our motive will not be revenge or the victorious assertion of the

physical might of the nation, but only the vindication of right, of human right, of which we are only a single champion.”¹ The victory of the Allies will be the victory of civilization; it should then be the patient and complete realization of the Right, not the rude affirmation of the fact.

Realization, not *restoration*, for what would be restored would be precisely the injustice which has weighed upon the world. Certainly one would not set over against a policy of annexations a policy of conquest; all desires of territorial ambition, whencesoever they may arise, will be bridled. The rights of peoples will be respected. But neither will any one be duped again by the artless formula, *Peace without annexations and indemnities*. A return to the *ante-bellum* status, the status whence arose “iniquitous war,”² would consolidate instead of killing despotism. We ought not to consider remedies merely because they have a pleasing and sonorous sound.³

Peace without annexation, that is a matter of course, but on condition that we reconsider *all annexations* sanctioned by the old order. In this case the formula, when analyzed, signifies

¹ President Wilson, Message to Congress, April 2, 1917.

² President Wilson, Note to Russia Stating War Aims.

³ *Ib.*

the redrawing of the map of Europe and of the world to the end that there may be no nation under subjection against its explicitly asserted will. This supposes that certain matters must be *readjusted* in some efficacious way. But this "readjustment" is not to be made in accordance with the political convenience of the victor, is not to be based upon strategic considerations. It will be based upon "very evident principles,"¹ and not upon interests, however apparently legitimate. These principles are "that no people must be forced under a sovereignty under which it does not wish to live; no territory must change hands, *except for the purpose of securing those who inhabit it a fair chance of life and liberty.*"² The realistic American conception rests upon the fact, "Existing States," and the presumption that the fact is in conformity with Right. But this presumption may be argued and overturned; it does not hold against solemnly announced historic claims, against collective protests many times renewed. Above all, it cannot prevail against the possibilities of national resurrection and rehabilitation.

"Peace without indemnity": again, so be it, if the word is understood in its rigid sense of

¹ *Ib.*

² *Ib.*

war indemnity, and if each nation is left to bear the burden of the debt which she contracted under this head. In strict justice, to be sure, those who were dragged into the struggle against their will should be indemnified by the aggressor for their losses. But, perhaps, all things considered, it would not be a bad thing that the weight of this frightful burden should be felt for a time, for a long time, by those who participated in this world cataclysm; perhaps it would be a salutary warning to too forgetful humanity, and to generations to come; perhaps indeed it would be well that every one should clearly understand that victories of the Right are costly, and when they result in the liberation of the world are never paid too dear. Then, accepting the worst, let there be no war indemnity, and may the general impoverishment upon which, on their own account, the Americans are ready to congratulate themselves, be the great lesson of this general conflagration. Let us rebuild the world, since it has been destroyed; let us reconstruct wealth, since it has been dissipated.

But, on the other hand, President Wilson insists upon reparation and every reparation—"payment for manifest wrongs done."¹ Is not

¹ *Ib.*

this the fundamental principle of private rights? Is it not the application of the elementary principle laid down in Article 1382 of our Civil Code, the one to which appeal is most frequently made? "Every act of man which works damage to another, obliges him to repair it by whose fault it has been done." And it is not a question of any sort of act; the acts are explicitly described, acts of theft, rapine, or pillage, done in cold blood, with premeditation, with systematic and deliberate method of destruction and devastation. It is not acts of war which are under consideration, but persevering efforts to ruin a people, to attack, not armies in their fighting strength, but nations at the fountainhead of their life. Not to repair damages such as these, not to repair them entirely, would be to legitimatize and foster crime. No, at least there must be restitution, firesides rebuilt for those whose roofs have been destroyed, means of labor, workshops, farms, machines, and tools restored to those who have been despoiled. Less than this may not be required.

Such are the conditions of a *just peace*; for peoples, liberty, freedom from despotism, unions agreed upon according to natural affinity and desire; for individuals, indemnification for losses

suffered, reconstitution of the former condition of things. These are not conditions *minima*, they are not conditions *maxima*; they are the only conditions possible, because they are the only equitable conditions. Justice knows neither *maxima* nor *minima*. Either it is justice or it is not.

But this first object is not enough. It is the most urgent—to restore things to their proper state, to redress wrongs, and so far as possible give to every one his due. But what guarantees the world, thus remade, against a possible return of Force? What secures existence, especially to the small nations whose rights have been so outrageously violated? There is only one way to maintain and consolidate the work built up by justice, and that is to create a “Society of Nations.”

This is the essential thing, without which everything that is done is of no account. “Our object now, as then, is to vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the life of the world as against selfish and autocratic power and to set up amongst the really free and self-governed peoples of the world such a concert of purpose and of action as will henceforth ensure the observance of those principles.”¹ Here again

¹ President Wilson, Message to Congress, April 2, 1917.

realism resumes its rights, but it is a broad-visioned realism which insures the *final* triumph of the ideal. It is nothing to vanquish if the victory must eternally be subject to question. What must be vanquished is not a predatory people, it is not Germany, it is war itself.

What we demand are guarantees against war, guarantees not territorial; there is no right of defense that can prevail against the will of a people. We must have legal guarantees resting upon legal bonds contracted by all nations, and placing international force at the service of outraged units. This, again, is the precise counterpart of private justice. A people will seek redress for crimes of which they are victims before the bar of the international tribunal as a citizen seeks redress for personal injuries before the tribunals of his country. And just as the national public force is put at the service of the wronged individual, so the international public force will rise up against any crime against a nation. To this end it is necessary and it is enough that the Internation shall become a reality.

It will become such because it is a necessity. There was a time, and not so long ago, when private justice too was illusory or paltry; in the early period of our history, at the beginning of

the Middle Ages, was there any justice for the poor against the rich, for the weak against the strong? Was there even, properly speaking, justice for the poor against the poor, or the weak against the weak? But as they became civilized, and in order to become civilized, people instituted legal guarantees. For fact they substituted law, at first precarious, uncertain, by degrees more and more fixed and weighty, until finally law existed in the same measure as society existed.

The same will inevitably be the case in the new world which is being prepared. If this war, with its horrors, has proved anything, it is that the world cannot live without justice. Iniquity has engendered ruin at a moment of universal, unprecedented prosperity; it has wasted money by milliards, and slaughtered men by millions. Humanity must organize itself against collective suicide and ruin. It can do so only under the form of the Internation.

It is the Internation, realized within the limits of its territory, which has permitted the unheard-of development of the United States of America. It is the Internation alone which will make possible the resurrection of Europe. There must be a "Constitution of the United States of the World" and an International

Supreme Court. There must be a common charter, an organ of union between all the liberated nations. The modalities are yet to be found, but the principle is indisputable, and it will triumph over sullen resistance and embittered prejudice. "And then the freed peoples of the world must draw together in some common covenant, some genuine and practical co-operation that will in effect combine their force to secure peace and justice in the dealings of nations with one another."¹

Thus, by the way of "liberty and equality" we reach true *fraternity*, not only between men but between peoples. "The brotherhood of mankind must no longer be a fair but empty phrase; it must be given a structure of force and reality."² It is not simply a question of independence but of efficacious mutual aid. It must no longer be a question whether we shall again witness the scandal of a Belgium invaded, violated, and bathed in blood by those who had themselves guaranteed her neutrality. There must never again be a "self-sacrifice for international honor."³ The era of martyrdom must be definitively closed, for such heroisms, though they be the glory of those who suffer and die by

¹ President Wilson, Note to Russia Stating War Aims.

² *Ib.*

³ Royce, *The Duty of Americans in the Present War*, p. 4.

them, are the shame of humanity that permitted them to suffer and to die. Side by side with their legitimate, indispensable individual lives, which in the past had the misfortune of being narrowly and unintelligently selfish, "the nations must realize their *common life* and effect a workable partnership to secure that life against the aggression of autocratic and self-pleasing power."¹

The American ideal in international matters is that of "organized peace." In fact America borrowed a part of the idea from Germany herself, that of the "organization" of which she is so proud, and not without some reason, since it has so long enabled her to make head "against a whole world of enemies." But the United States propose to put organization to uses diametrically opposed to hers. They will organize peace, will organize humanity, will organize the ideal that they may realize it. They will kill war.

"To such a task we dedicate our lives and our fortunes, everything that we are and everything that we have, with the pride of those who know that the day has come when America is

¹ President Wilson, Note to Russia Stating War Aims.

privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured. God helping her, she can do no other.”¹

This conclusion of Mr. Wilson’s Message raises his country to its true plane and there is none higher. To it may be applied, and there can be no nobler eulogy, what Michelet said of France, that among all European nations she was the one that knew how to fight “for disinterested causes that would profit only the world.”

America has a sense of what she owes to the world, and in this she is in harmony with herself, with “the principles of which she was born.” It was her ideal which brought her into being. For her, to be just is the first condition of existence. To be unjust would be to die. No, she could “do no other.”

“The day has arrived,” not the day of glory—for that implies a notion of war and of victory by arms—but the day of justice, and of justice for all. What President Wilson willed for America he also wills for the universe. While he was struggling against the greedy and menacing power of the trusts, it one day occurred to him to say: “What we propose therefore in

¹ *Id.*, Message to Congress, April 2, 1917.

this programme of freedom, is a programme of general advantage.”¹ What is he doing to-day but extending to all nations those benefits of liberty by which until now his country alone has been able completely to profit? He would no longer consent to the supremacy of Germany—that bad shepherd and tyrant of the world—than he would consent to the supremacy of the “companies,” though they might be good tyrants and shepherds devoted to the flock. No nation should be a flock, no nation should be either an instrument or an object of domination by another people. Either liberty is for all, or it is not liberty.

But men in general have altogether too artless a notion of liberty. Among individuals it runs the risk, through competition, of ending in monopoly. Among nations it tends, by means of violence, to constitute a hegemony, and from the hegemony of one to the servitude of another there is only a step. “Freedom, to-day, is something more than being left alone. The programme of a government of freedom must in these days be positive and not negative merely.”² What more eloquent commentary on these words, which were spoken to Americans only, shall we find than certain passages

¹ *Id.*, *The New Freedom*, p. 265.

² *Ib.*, p. 284.

of the Message to Congress or of the Notification to the Russian People?

To sum up, is not this foreseen and commended "readjustment" explicitly affirmed in this explanation of the word "freedom"? What is freedom? "Human freedom consists in perfect readjustments of human interests and human activities, and human energies."¹ So to harmonize the free play of forces as to obtain the maximum of result, is always the same concrete and practical method that is applied to America alone, and which is to be extended to all humanity.

This is the basis of the policy of harmony and collaboration. Even this must pay, and thus far it is truly American; it will pay in prosperity and well-being. This fraternal liberty is not a synonym of sterility but of intense productivity. It is a combination of efforts in the plenitude of self-possession. The world may no more be monopolized than an individual, a class, a country. Let each nation be a focus, a point of expansion, and here also let *democratic pluralism* oppose itself to *autocratic monism*.

And all under the ægis of the law, of the bond accepted by all. "Liberty armed with

¹ *Ib*, pp 281, 282.

law.”¹ Such was from the beginning the doctrine, at once binding and emancipating, of those who made the United States. “What do we find proposed in the writings of the men who founded America? To serve the self-seeking interests of America? Never: but *to serve the cause of humanity, to bring liberty to the human race.*”² A people is great which, like this one, can exist only on the condition of excelling itself. The United States have willed and have attempted to realize, with the help of all other countries, the country of humanity. Michelet said: “The *patrie* is a large friendship.” America may add: “Humanity is the largest friendship.”

It is impossible not to be struck by the resemblance that exists between the American ideal and that of the great French revolutionists. These affinities have more than once been noticed. “The Americans,” wrote Mr. Morton Fullerton, “have become the coadjutors, the associates, the continuators of the French in their inveterate and remarkable tendency always to undertake a world task. The two countries have in fact often been called to work

¹ *Les États-Unis et la France*, Conférence de I. M. Baldwin, p. 167.

² *Ib.*, p. 238.

for other interests than their own. It is a part of their peculiar destiny to have to live, not only for themselves but for humanity."¹ And he adds: "The only people in the world at the present time capable of apprehending something of the precise sense of the word 'humanity' as the French use it, are perhaps those of North America."²

Nothing is more true. The American business man with his unpolished manners and the thoughtful Frenchman with his rare and delicate sentiments are, in spite of appearance, the two beings in the world best qualified to understand one another. Both have the sense of political equality, both have the democratic sense, and, above all, both have what may be called the world sense.

But they have it very differently. The Frenchman is, above all, intellectualistic, he moves among general as well as generous ideas, he conceives his ideal before he realizes it. The American, busy, practical, realizes his idea before conceiving it. During long centuries the Frenchman has aspired after liberty while submitting to servitude, and after breaking his chain he has more than once assumed it again, and has even forged a new one. The American,

¹ *Ib.*, *Fullerton Lecture*, p. 187.

² *Ib.*, p. 188.

the moment he became aware of the yoke, shook it off, and perceived that he willed liberty on the day when he achieved it. Both are broadly, deeply human, but the Frenchman was always conscious of being such, and was such by instinct, without calculation; while the American, powerfully self-interested, sought first of all and only to realize himself, and perceived that he could not effect this without liberating his fellows. He arose to the loftiest humanitarian conceptions without willing or being aware of it, and almost in spite of himself.

But what matter the roads trodden so long as they lead to the same end? That which these two peoples have in common is the individualism which alone, in spite of its anarchistic aspects, brings it to pass that from self-respect one rises to respect for his fellow beings, and learns to treat them as equals. With opposite temperaments, with different methods, one on the plane of thought and the other on the plane of action, France and America will be the two great emancipating nations, because they are the two great idealistic nations.

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CHAPTER V

AMERICAN IDEALISM

IDEALISM AND REALISM.—IS THERE AN AMERICAN IDEALISM?

WHAT is idealism? In what sense may one say that American idealism exists?

To answer these questions is to penetrate to the very depths of the American soul. Does this people, the "people of action," shut itself up in the vigorous but narrow self-interest which is generally recognized as its single virtue? Or do they not cause to spring up from this very realism, perhaps unconsciously, an idealism of renewed youth?

I

AMERICAN IDEALISM

There is no American idealism.—The meagreness of American life.—Philosophical empiricism.—Utilitarian religion.—Imitative art.—Lack of sentimental comprehension.—The morals of self-interest.

We find in the language of philosophy few words which express more things, and express them more inadequately, than the word "ideal-

ism." And yet, if the sense which it offers to the mind is far from clear, there is no mistaking the sentiment which it awakens within us. In every domain it implies that, beyond that which is and which is bad or average, one conceives of and desires something which shall be sovereignly good, or at least infinitely better. To be an idealist is to be not contented with the present existence; to feel with regard to the world that is, perhaps contempt, in any case dissatisfaction, and to aspire to surpass it.

Consequently, he is not an idealist whose great concern is to live, to confine himself within the narrow sphere of his practical occupation, in the meagreness of material business and purely human interests. And if, as is certainly the case, this is the simplified but faithful *schema* of existence in the New World, is it really possible to speak of American idealism?

Far from weakening, the objective appears to take on greater force if we pass from generalities to details, and follow the scent of idealism through the various domains into which it assumes to penetrate. There is, first of all, a *philosophic idealism*, which is essentially characterized by distrust of experience and belief in suprasensible realities. This is the idealism

of Plato, to whom sensation is only the deceitful symbol of the idea, and who, over against the fluid and inconstant universe of disintegrating facts, sets the intelligible world of pure, eternal essences. It is that of Descartes, that mathematical genius who resolved facts into ideas, and forced empirical reality, all quivering with life and overflowing with wealth, into the cold, uniform equation that expresses it; what we call reality is an apparent mirage created by the imagination, that "mistress of error," and which the understanding dissipates, reducing the world to be only one great truth. It is finally the Kantian idealism, which on one side admits of nothing outside of the mind but a froth and chaos of sensations, disconnected and formless, upon which pure Reason imposes its laws, which above all sees in the work of Reason herself, and of the science which she constructs, nothing but an organized and systematized illusion, and places true reality outside of experience, outside of the senses, outside even of the intelligence, in the inaccessible and supernatural world of the thing in itself.

The feature common to all these doctrines is their defiance of facts, of the concrete; the external world is only a dream, and all reality takes refuge in the domain of ideas. Nothing

is more repugnant to the realistic mind of the American. He has not the philosophic head; he lives in direct and permanent contact with the facts which metaphysics removes from his road. He has and he will have no general ideas, no rigid and finished concepts. He cannot comprehend the permanence and immutability of the Platonic essences, or of the categories of Kant, he who lives in the fluctuation, the movement, the perpetual renewing of beings and things. He is not an "intellectual," a "delicate" person; he is a man of action and of realization, a "barbarian."¹

There is also a *religious idealism* which he is incapable of understanding. It is that of the strict Christian, the man of contemplation, who turns with disgust from the things of this world, who flees the "shameful attachments of the world and the flesh"² to lose himself in ecstasy and live in God, far from men, freed from all the defilements of this "flesh of sin," seeking salvation in solitude and self-mortification. The ascetic ideal of the monk in his cell, or his Thebaid, the life which, in the words of *The Imitation*, confines itself to "meditation on

¹ William James, *Pragmatism*, p. 12.

² Corneille, *Polyeucte*, Act IV, Scene II.

death"—what sense can it have for this people of "toilers," whose affections are set upon a purely human task? The God of whom they think is not a mystical God exacting from his creatures acts of sterile adoration, an absentee God "in a world in which a God would be superfluous; from such a world a God could never be missed."¹ He is a God made for man, who works in concert with him, who comes down into the arena and struggles at his side. His kingdom is of this world.

As for *æsthetic idealism*, it is still more foreign than the others to the positive spirit of the American. Absorbed in urgent needs, he has only tardily and incompletely arrived at art, poetry, literature. Art is a luxury, the luxury of the refined. It presupposes long leisure, the exquisite indifference of a La Fontaine, musing in the delicate and lonely landscapes of the Ile-de-France, or the austere labor of an Alfred de Vigny, shut up in his "ivory tower." One must, with Lamartine, "lead his muse to the depths of solitude," and

"Make fragrant his heart for its resting-place."

But how, in this severe daily battle which constitutes American life, in its shocks and fevers,

¹ William James, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

shall one find the calm retreat necessary to the artist? Above all, how, with this love of the active life, shall one so shake off the thousand demands of the outer world as to give himself to the slow ripening of a masterpiece? How, indeed, shall this practical imagination, wholly directed toward the creation of mechanical appliances and utilitarian scientific inventions, pursue the course of its reverie and place its ideal in the mere expansion of a state of soul which has no other object than itself?

The American, then, cannot conceive of the pure æsthetic ideal, "art for art's sake." Nor can he much more easily conceive of art as a means to an end, outside of itself. He is still in the period of imitation. His architecture, even his paintings, have the stamp of his European masters. There is no American school of art, and still less is there an artistic genius of the race.¹

¹ It is self-evident that the conception thus outlined is that of the American people in general, necessarily leaving out of the question the few individual efforts which would react against this tendency. One of these is particularly interesting. It is that which Mr. Baldwin in his *Genetic Theory of Reality* (1916), of which a French edition is about to appear, has developed under the name of Pancalism (from *pan*, all, and *kalos*, beautiful), a very new and original theory which seeks to reconcile intellectualism and pragmatism by a synthesis establishing the hegemony of the æsthetic. According to the author this is done by addressing oneself to the synthetic domain of art, in which American life will seek and has already sought to escape from the encroachments of utilitarianism. See on this subject M. Lalande's article on "Pancalism," *Revue philosophique*, 15 decembre 1915.

Can we at least find in the United States traces of what may be called *sentimental idealism*? More profoundly human than any other, this nation responds to that imperious need of affection which is the privilege of no one people, the need of loving and still more of being loved. Passion is of no time and no country.

But no, here again we meet with disappointment. The fevers of passion, its wild hopes, its crushing despairs, all that antiquity and Europe have sung, awaken few echoes in the United States. Of all our poets Huret found Musset to be the least understood by American girls, and doubtless also by their brothers. It would seem that the American is too much in haste to act to be able to feel profoundly. Those "reasons of the heart of which the reason knows nothing" neither move nor disturb him; he is too cold and reasonable, perhaps, also too healthy, for that. The infinite delicacy of a Sully-Prudhomme is as foreign to him as the sickly refinement of a Beaudelaire, and from this point of view, at least, all our poetic and sentimental literature is to him a dead letter.

Finally, even to *moral idealism* he seems inaccessible. The idea of sacrifice, of the gift of oneself, taken literally, is not an American idea. He deems it absurd and almost revolting. To

sacrifice oneself *for nothing*, for an abstraction, a pure idea, is nonsense to him. He will readily admit that it is to his interest to be virtuous; but that virtue has a value, in itself considered, he would find it difficult to concede. He does not understand disinterestedness, pure and simple, self-abnegation; we may go further and say that his conscience protests against it, and protests in the name of Right. Why should I subordinate myself to another? Why should I consider his interest before my own? Why, if he is weak, should I squander myself for his succor? Why, if he is incapable, should I try to save a worthless man? Let us be just, not charitable. Charity is a weakness. The American has too strong and too powerful a personality to consent to abdicate it in the name of a so-called duty. Is it not his true duty to be himself?

But in this case where is idealism? Where is the ideal? We have to do with a people of rare energy, indomitable, but of short and contracted views. Their eyes are not lifted to the heavens, to a star. They keep them bent upon the earth. They perform their task manfully, but they do not surpass themselves, and the property of idealism, as we have said, is to sur-

pass oneself. The American is a *realist*. He is the most daring and powerful of realists, but he is only this.

II

AMERICAN IDEALISM

There is an American idealism.—Idealism of action, not of thought.—Philosophy of life and of creation.—Religion of humanity and salvation by effort.—Militant art.—Strong sensibility against weak sensibility.—The morals of will and of work.—Fundamental tendency: to “free energies” in order to “liberate values.”

Conclusion: The practical ideal of actuality substituted for the intellectual ideal of culture.

The judgment appears to be without appeal, and yet, in the course of our work, we have brought forward numerous, and it seems to us, incontestable proofs of the idealistic tendencies of the American soul. We have seen this idealism at work, and, so to speak, in action.

Is not here the key to the problem? American idealism is not a theoretic idealism, conceived and formulated; it is a practical idealism which springs from action itself. It is wholly in the creative impulse.

From this point of view all becomes clear. The American does not lay out in advance what he afterward endeavors to carry out.

He does not, like Plato, construct an ideal republic on paper, on which archetype he afterward tries, vainly indeed, to model existing society. No, he begins by forming a real republic, which goes on as it can, not without jerks, and from which emanates in fact, and not in idea, the ideal which it potentially contained, and which passes into act as the republic develops. An ideal which, in fact, is not mere "Platonic," which is not a mere representation, doubtless perfect and adorned with all the virtues, like Roland's mare, and, like her, having only the one fault of being dead, and indeed of having been still-born; an ideal which, on the contrary, has as many defects as you please, with the one good quality—which counts for something—of being alive and even life-giving, an ideal which makes a people live, and which perhaps will to-morrow revive the human race.

If, by the light of this guiding thought, we survey anew each department of human activity in which idealism might and ought to be found, we shall perceive the original and fruitful part which American idealism has played in it.

First, an essentially philosophical part. Philosophy, like the humanity of which she is only a well-considered expression, is at one of the

great turning-points of history. She feels that the absolute is escaping her grasp, and that in making every effort to define it she is running the risk of clasping only a shadow. She must more and more draw near to the concrete, to life. It is surely the merit of philosophy to make the life that we are actually living appear real and serious.¹ If to this end she must exorcise the absolute, must exorcise the great destroyer of the only life which we feel within us,² so much the worse for the absolute. If even pure intellectualism have some little to suffer by it, so much the worse for intellectualism. It is for it to abandon whatever may have been outworn or excessive in its pretensions. Life was not made for thought; thought should adapt and suit itself to life. The success of pragmatism, of Bergsonianism (a philosophy from many points of view very American), is, above all things, due to this profound reason. "The great thing in philosophy is not logic but impassioned vision,"³ the vision of this very life, this "strenuous life," of which Mr. Roosevelt speaks, and which the American lives.

In this realism there is no annihilation, no destruction, of the ideal, but its renewal and revitalizing. There will no longer be an intellec-

¹ William James.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

tual world suspended above a sensible world; the ideal will not be superimposed upon the real in a more or less artificial manner; it will express nothing other than the urge of reality itself. The ideal will be the free and joyful realization of life as a whole; we shall not live for an ideal, the ideal will make one body with life; it will be life with its pliability, its enthusiasm, its radiance.

In its turn *religious idealism* is revived as it approaches the real, the true world. The celestial country plunges its roots into the most profound depths of the terrestrial country. As a result, the spiritual life becomes a function of the material life; its principal duty is to regulate and administer it, to "give pasture" to man. "I have often reflected that there is a very human order in the petitions in our Lord's Prayer. For we pray first of all, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' knowing that it is useless to pray for spiritual graces on an empty stomach, and that the amount of wages we get, the kind of clothes we wear, the kind of food we can afford to buy is fundamental to everything else."¹ Far from lowering the religious ideal, such a realism exalts it, gives it rights of citi-

¹ Woodrow Wilson, *The New Freedom*, p. 197.

zenship among men. It no longer incurs the severe reproach which an American author justly directed against the monachal and contemplative conception: "Religion is like a sleep-walker, to whom actual things are blank."¹ It is no longer a question of losing oneself in God, with the mystic, seeking salvation in inward purification. God should come down to men, and that later, in a future life, he may be better, should begin by rendering him less wretched here below. "Whatever the God of heaven and earth is, he can surely be no gentleman. His menial services are needed in the dust of our human trials."² The way of salvation is happiness, merited happiness, happiness by means of justice, of course, but the prosperity for which God works side by side with men, and, we are almost bold to say, treating him as equal to equal. If he has a credit against us we have also one to present to him. We owe him labor and he owes us its reward.

The ideal value of religion, then, is to bring strength to life, to intensify effort, to augment the confidence of the "robust." It is to give tone to the individual.

The same is the case with art. No doubt

¹ Morrison J. Swift, quoted by William James, *Pragmatism*, p. 32.

² *Ib.*, p. 72.

the American is not naturally an artist; above all, he is not one according to the accepted formula, he admits no art that is foreign to life. But he draws from life itself the sound of a whisper and a flame of which only youthful peoples know the secret. That in plastic art he may be more imitative than original, notwithstanding the many talents that he has revealed, that especially in architecture he is lacking in reserve and in taste, seeks for effect, and at times confuses the striking with the beautiful, is possible. But he brings to literature, with the humor which is the special gift of certain of his authors, a freshness of expression and an ardor which is only too seldom found in our lands of culture and decorum.

Let any one read a page of Emerson, a poem of Longfellow or Walt Whitman, or even an article by William James, and he is first of all struck by the energy which emanates from these writings, at once pulsating and sustained. There is a certain air of relationship between all these works, which yet are of such varied inspirations. All give the same impression of energy, of easy, happy, unpremeditated movement. They have virility, they have savor.

But when one reads further one perceives

that their common characteristic is the lyrical note, the overflowing of personality, the effusion of a rich and vernal nature, spontaneous and abundant. The American is lyric because he has two lyrical qualities, enthusiasm and individuality. Why should he not be enthusiastic when all space is open to him, when he lives in a sort of perpetual fairy-land of creation and invention? What matters it that he is concerned with material productions and that the smoke of factories veils the azure of the skies? There is poetry, if not in the machine, as has too often been said, at least in the mind of him who finds or builds it, in the hand of him who works it, in the impulse which puts all these forces in action—a somewhat unskilled, wild poetry which goes well with his temperament.

As for his individuality, it lets itself go with the same ardor whether he writes or reads or carries on a business. His literature is a literature of action. It will not complacently set forth states of the soul, or analyze characters. To recur to examples already given, it will produce neither a La Fontaine nor a Vigny, neither the shrewd wit of the "Bonhomme" nor the sad and lofty serenity of the author of the *Destinies*. Both of these, so different to us, are in relation to it too complex and too self-

contained. They narrate themselves, while it gives itself. But while thus surrendering itself entirely, it seeks to move its reader and carry him along with itself, to work a change in him, to excite his energies. The American writes as he fights; he is a militant. His muse does not hold a lyre in her hand; she brandishes a sword while she blows a trumpet.

But it must be clearly recognized that this active idealism can never be a *sentimental idealism*. Even in art it finds, though unawares to itself, an instrument; in sentiment it meets only an obstacle. The American understands little of passion and fondness; if he did understand them he would be inclined to fight them. Sentiment weakens, undermines energy, or turns it aside. The fond are fastidious, the fastidious are impotent. They are laggards on the highway, and the American does not lag.

A summary judgment, of which, however, one must not think too slightly. Lamartine was equally severe upon Musset, "a young man with a heart of wax," and did not Sully-Prudhomme make the melancholy avowal of his own impotence when he wrote:

"Un voyage, telle est la vie
Pour ceux qui n'osent que rêver"?

Yet we must understand one another. To object to the *sentimentality*, the romantic vagueness of soul, the half-sincere, half-artificial agonies of Musset's *Nuits*, is not to condemn every sort of *sentiment*, and we have seen that there are sentiments that go straight to the American heart, those that reach it through the reason and the conscience. Take, for example, the German crimes against Belgium, or—apart from the interests directly at stake—the outrage against women and children in the sinking of the *Lusitania*. The American is easily impressionable, but he is not affected by the same things as the Englishman, and especially the Frenchman. He has that generosity of the righteous man which refuses to admit of any attack upon the right, or upon human personality. If he has a passion it is the passion for liberty and law, a simple, healthy, one may almost say an impersonal, passion. What he knows nothing of is amorous passion, with its ardors and its agitations, as much physiological as psychological, in which the senses and the imagination create a mirage and sometimes a frenzy. He does not lose himself in yearnings and ecstasies. He feels only what he can understand. Sentiment is for him something vigorous, healthy, and strong.

Finally, may we say of American morals that they determinedly banish the ideal? Do they drag themselves along the shallows of a paltry utilitarianism in which the individual pursues only the satisfaction of his individual desires? If this be so, how are we to understand that the United States, throughout all their history, and to-day more than ever, have supported only just causes, have always been soldiers of the Right?

Unquestionably the American is self-interested so far as the will to develop his individuality to the highest degree constitutes what is called self-interest. Conscious of his worth, assured that he is a power, he proposes to sacrifice nothing of himself, not one of all the possibilities, eager to become actualities, which he finds within himself, and which are himself. Therefore he does not consent that his will to power shall be shackled or limited. He is hard upon the weak, for weakness is the sign either of intellectual mediocrity or moral cowardice, and nothing really useful can be done for mediocrity, and nothing beneficial for the cowardly. Pity, charity, gentleness, humility—these Christian virtues seem to him to be faults, and almost vices. They do no good to those who profit by them, they work harm to those who practise them, for they prevent his being himself.

There is another Christianity, less steeped in tenderness, by no means drowned in tears, which is active, fruitful. It does not content itself with saying "Peace to men of good-will," for it is not enough that the intention be pure, it is necessary that activity be real, sustained, and lead to something. This Christianity is more likely to say: "Peace to men of strong wills." It does not preach charity, that incomplete and belittled justice which presupposes and sanctions inequality among men; it demands the right, that total justice, which is possible only among equals.

The moral ideal of the American, then, is the legal ideal, absolute respect for the human person. It is a respect which does not go so far as to treat him as an end, but which absolutely forbids treating him as a means. It is not for me to make you the end of my effort, any more than to ask you to make me the end of yours; each should work for his own well-being, each should live his own life and not the life of others. Indeed there is something degrading in expecting another to live in your place and stead, and to make morality the justification of parasitism. This is the condemnation of the usual philanthropy, of ill-understood humanity.

But, on the other hand, on no account and upon no pretext should a man be the instru-

ment of another man, or a people the slaves of another people. The individual must be freed, and the world must be freed. Each one must be enabled to enter the lists and there take his chance. All oppressions and all tyrannies must be done away with: internal tyrannies of the trusts, money powers stifling individual initiatives, or governments by autocrats, political powers stifling popular movements and protests; external tyrannies of military nations, whose wild and unwholesome dreams of universal hegemony, if they should ever take form, would make the whole world the thing of one individual and the tomb of liberty. Morality, the whole of morality, is to break chains, and every chain. Let us apply to the entire human race, as President Wilson himself did, what he demanded for his country: "Only the emancipation, the freeing and heartening of the vital energies of all the people will redeem us."¹ And again: "We have got to set the energy and the initiative of this great people absolutely free."²

Morality, then, has not charity for its end; a morality of charity is a morality of slaves. It does not give more happiness to man—that is not its business—but it procures for him, through

¹ Woodrow Wilson, *The New Freedom*, p. 288.

² *Ib.*, p. 292.

universal enfranchisement, the conditions of a happy life. Its true end is "to set energies entirely free in order fully to release values."¹

Value, thus, in the eyes of the American, is the only thing that counts; and this is why his moral conceptions seem to us on certain points so narrow, not to say harsh, and on others so large. This is why, setting out from self-interest, which to him signifies the right of value, and of every value, to assert itself, it finally ends in the legal society of nations, the necessary condition and indispensable warrant of such an assertion. The moral ideal is the individualistic ideal.

Here, then, we may conclude, there is an American idealism, and we know both what it is not and what it is.

It is not an intellectual ideal, it is not an ideal of culture, it is a practical ideal, an ideal of realization. It is not the ideal of yesterday, such as was conceived by European thought. It is the ideal of to-morrow, such as is willed by American action. Far from disdaining reality, the American is at once inspired by it and defies it. "The world is a real adventure with

¹ Izoulet, Introduction to the French translation of *The New Freedom*, p. 7.

real danger.”¹ We have neither the right nor the power to stand aloof from it, for in it and by it we live. We cannot escape its embrace. But we are not subject to its exigencies, and it is for us to modify it by our will. It is not a world made once for all, a ready-made world; it is not even a world self-made, mechanically, by virtue of immutable laws upon which we have no hold. In reality it is we who are making it, at least so far as it concerns us, we who turn its necessity in the direction of our desires. This is our ideal, and it is one with our task. “If we must accept our destiny we are none the less constrained to assert the liberty and the importance of the individual, the grandeur of duty, the power of character.”² Our part is not to accept but to master the world.

And this is a great part, and moral, for it finally establishes the triumph of mind over matter. It is neither resignation nor revolt, it is the well-understood and valiantly accepted struggle of man against the *Fatum*. It is “adventure” and “risk” indeed, without ignorance as without fear of “danger.” A people who with such alacrity accepts it is indeed an idealistic people. They do not clearly define to

¹ William James, *Pragmatism*, p. 290.

² Emerson, *The Conduct of Life: Fate*.

themselves their ideals; they do better, they live them.

“The American ideal is not that of the intellectual vision but of the practical life. It is certainly not, as is sometimes asserted, an ideal in the material order, great, costly, unspiritual. *It is moral and not material*; its desire is for that which is just: liberty, equality, fraternity in the social and moral order.”¹

¹ *Les États-Unis et la France*. Conférence de M. Baldwin, pp. 168, 169.

